THE WIFE of MONTE CRISTO

ALEX DUMAS

THE

WIFE OF MONTE-CRISTO,

BEING THE CONTINUATION OF

ALEXANDER DUMAS'

CELEBRATED NOVEL OF

THE COUNT OF MONTE-CRISTO.

"A beautiful yacht is flying over the waters of the Mediterranean, displaying a scarlet pennant. On the deck stands the Count of Monte-Cristo, with head uncovered, enveloped in a cloak, the folds of which admirably drape his magnificent form. With arms folded on his breast, he looks into vacancy, seemingly absorbed in thought. Leaning on his shoulder, in a charming attitude of love and confidence, stands Haydée, his wife, a woman of marvellous beauty, clothed in some Eastern fabric. He turned with his heart in his eyes as, gently drawing her to his breast, he pressed his lips on the dark ripples of her hair. Behind this noble pair stood Ali, like a marble statue, ready to obey the smallest signal of him who had saved his life, and whom he adored as he did the mysterious gods of his own land," etc.—*Page 198.*

CHICAGO

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"The Wife of Monte-Cristo" is a remarkable novel that will surely attain immense popularity, and that immediately, for never has a romance of greater interest or power been published. It teems with excitement and adventure, absolutely bristles with thrilling incidents, and has an element of mystery that vastly augments its wonderful fascination. It is the continuation of Alexander Dumas' world-renowned creation, "The Count of Monte-Cristo," and is fully worthy of being associated with that masterwork. The Count himself, Haydée, Mercédès, Benedetto, once the false Prince Cavalcanti, Madame Danglars, Valentine de Villefort and other well-known personages figure very prominently in the charming narrative, and Monte-Cristo's son, Esperance, is as brave a little hero as ever pen described. The plot is unusually strong and compact, the action rapid and uninterrupted, and the succession of startling surprises continuous. Benedetto's escape from the Toulon galleys, the revolt in Milan and the struggle with the Arabs in Algeria are specially dramatic amid legions of dramatic scenes. In short, "The Wife of Monte-Cristo" is nothing less than a literary marvel. All who read it will surely be both charmed and delighted, especially those who have read "The Count of Monte-Cristo."

"The Wife of Monte-Cristo" cannot fail to excite profound attention, for a better, stronger or more absorbing novel has never been given to the world. The continuation of Alexander Dumas' masterpiece, "The Count of Monte-Cristo," it has all the power, vividness and intensity of that renowned romance, and weaves a spell of fascination about the reader impossible to resist. It has not a page that is not replete with action and excitement, while the amount of thrilling and startling episodes introduced is simply astounding, showing a fertility of inventive genius never equalled in any work of fiction. France, Italy and Algeria form the field of the narrative, and some of the features are the trial, conviction and escape from the galleys of the former Prince Cavalcanti, an insurrection in Milan and a host of stirring adventures with fanatical Arabs in Algeria. The Count of Monte-Cristo, Haydée, Mercédès, Madame Danglars, Valentine de Villefort and other personages made famous by Dumas reappear, and Monte-Cristo's heroic son, Esperance, fills a highly important role. Old and young will find in "The Wife of Monte-Cristo" a rich and rare treat that they will vastly enjoy. All who have read "The Count of Monte-Cristo" should get it and read it.

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THE

WIFE OF MONTE-CRISTO

PROLOGUE.

IN THE COURT-ROOM.

"THE COUNT OF MONTE-CRISTO must have a hand in this!"

"He has!"

"And the throng pouring into the Palais de Justice means?"

"That Paris has a new sensation, or rather an old one revived. Benedetto, the false Prince Cavalcanti, is to be tried to-day in the Assize Court for the murder of Caderousse."

"Ah! yes, I remember it all now—the burglary in the house of the Count of Monte-Cristo—the assassination—Benedetto's arrest—the dramatic incident of the first trial. No wonder all Paris is excited. Let us go in and witness the developments."

"With all my heart."

The speakers were Beauchamp and Château-Renaud. They had just alighted from separate coupés and, meet-

ing in the street, the above-mentioned conversation had ensued. Immediately they locked arms, and mingling with the concourse entered the Palais de Justice.

It was the 14th of January, 1839, about three months after the departure of the Count of Monte-Cristo. The hour was eleven in the morning; it was bitterly cold and great flakes of snow were descending in fleecy torrents; the streets were covered with ice.

When Beauchamp and Château-Renaud entered the court-room it was already packed.

"When does the Benedetto case come up?" asked Beauchamp of a young advocate.

"Another matter precedes it on the docket, but that will soon be disposed of."

As Beauchamp turned to move away he was suddenly brought face to face with an elegant looking woman, heavily draped and evidently disguised. He gave a quick start and catching Château-Renaud by the arm drew him into a corner.

"Did you notice that woman?" he asked, in an agitated whisper.

"Yes," answered Château-Renaud; "but what of her?"

"Hush! Don't speak so loudly. Debray is here, and that woman—"

"Mon Dieu! this Monte-Cristo romance has turned your head! What has that woman to do with Debray's presence? She does not even glance toward him; besides, another man is with her."

"I tell you that woman is—"

"Well, who is she?"

"Madame Danglars!"

"What!"

It was now Château-Renaud's turn to start. The woman meanwhile had withdrawn into a remote corner of the court-room, where she sat with her companion, a tall, yellow, emaciated man, with a bald, pointed head, who nervously occupied a chair, his hands on his knees and his eyes fixed upon the crucifix hanging on the wall back of the judges. The woman had carefully covered her face with a thick vail; not a feature of her countenance could be distinguished.

"This is the strangest of all," muttered Château-Renaud. "I thought Madame Danglars had vanished like the other participants in the great Monte-Cristo catastrophes, save Benedetto, never to be heard of more."

"You forget Monsieur de Villefort," said Beauchamp, quietly.

"Oh! he is mad and in D'Avrigny's asylum. As for Madame de Villefort and her son, they are certainly dead; there can be no doubt whatever about that."

"But Valentine?"

"What do you mean? The poor girl is dead also."

"Don't be too sure of that. There is something very like sorcery in all these affairs with which that weird being, the Count of Monte-Cristo, is associated. A friend told me he met Mademoiselle de Villefort alive and well in Marseilles!"

"What you tell me is, indeed, wonderful—absolutely beyond the bounds of mortal comprehension. Should this prove true, I shall believe the age of miracles has returned."

"And so it has!"

"Well, after this I shall expect Monsieur Danglars to come back from the fogs of the Mediterranean! But that handsome and eccentric Mademoiselle Danglars, the best of the family, where is she?"

"You ask me too much. I have heard nothing of her, but I should not be surprised to hear that she is a cantatrice or an actress somewhere, if her career should not turn out to be even a more startling one."

"What of Debray?"

"Oh! he has his millions and nothing to do since the fall of his Minister."

"Benedetto came within an inch of being his son-in-law. That would have given him employment enough!"

"Yes, I fancy it would!"

"Old Noirtier has gone south, but where he is now no one knows—it is an impenetrable mystery that, doubtless, will never be probed. You remember the Morcerfs, of course. After the count committed suicide, his son Albert, who was a soldier, went to Algeria to fight for France and has not been heard of since. If he is not dead, he is a prisoner in the hands of the Arabs, suffering torture a thousand times worse than death. Madame de Morcerf—"

"Yes, Mercédès, the Count of Monte-Cristo's old lady-love."

"Is nowhere to be found, but before young Albert's departure, he and his mother gave the suicide's great fortune to the poor."

"Well, Benedetto yet remains to be disposed of, and

the law will certainly punish him as he deserves. He is a consummate scoundrel."

"Yes, the evidence is all against him, and of the most convincing character."

The court-room was now thronged to its utmost capacity; every available spot was occupied.

At this moment a low, smothered cry escaped from the lips of the mysterious woman supposed by Beauchamp and Château-Renaud to be Madame Danglars. The close, stifling atmosphere of the crowded court-room had overcome her, and she had fallen back in her chair as if in a swoon. Those in her immediate vicinity gathered tumultuously about her, and her companion who had risen excitedly to his feet, was heard calling for water. Beauchamp procured some in a pitcher, and hastily quitting Château-Renaud, with a glass in his hand pressed forward through the crowd. When Beauchamp reached the woman's side, he excitedly strove to lift her vail, but her watchful companion held it firmly down, and grasping the pitcher and glass gave her a drink, or rather moistened her lips. This partially revived her, and struggling wildly, she exclaimed:

"My boy, oh! where is my poor, unfortunate boy?"

Her companion's visage assumed an ashen hue and his hand trembled like a leaf shaken by the wind. Château-Renaud was now at Beauchamp's side. The twain exchanged a quick glance of intelligence and satisfaction. They waited an instant to hear something further, but in this they were disappointed, for the vailed woman, having recovered consciousness. uttered not another

syllable, and they were compelled to return to their former position.

"What did I tell you!" whispered Beauchamp to Château-Renaud, with an air of triumph.

"You were right," answered the latter; "that woman must, indeed, be the missing Madame Danglars. Will wonders never cease?"

"Never where the Count of Monte-Cristo is concerned!" returned Beauchamp, with an air of profound conviction.

"What can that woman hope to do by her mere presence in the court-room?" inquired Château-Renaud, anxiously.

"I am sure I cannot tell," replied Beauchamp. "I am utterly bewildered."

"Perhaps she counts on making a dramatic scene at the proper time, and thus inspiring sympathy for the accused," ventured Château-Renaud.

"You will not be kept much longer in suspense, for the trial now occupying the attention of the court is very near its close."

"But who can Madame Danglars' companion be?"

"I am at a loss to determine; he cannot be a favorite of hers, for he is without doubt the most repulsive person I ever beheld."

"It may be that he is merely a servant."

"I think not; he displayed too much interest in her during her swoon for that."

Beauchamp glanced at Debray, who was evidently uneasy, though he strove to maintain a show of impassibility. The others who had heard Madame Danglars

words had either paid no attention to them or had failed to seize their meaning, for it was clear that the only feeling that swayed the crowd was idle curiosity, mingled with a desire to hear a death sentence pronounced upon a hardened and detested assassin.

At length Benedetto's case was reached and there was a stir throughout the entire vast assemblage. A low hum of conversation resounded from every direction. The President called imperatively and sternly for silence, and when perfect quiet again reigned, fraught with the multitude's mute expectation, he said, in a voice of dignified solemnity:

"Let the accused, the prisoner Benedetto, be brought in."

Again there was a slight buzz of curiosity; people stood on tiptoe and craned their necks to get a sight of the former Prince Cavalcanti, now known to be a desperate swindler, and as an additional aggravation charged with having taken the life of a fellow creature. The ladies rose on the floor and struggled with the men to see this once brilliant wretch, while the fair sex in the gallery leaned forward, agitating their fans to create a current of refreshing coolness.

When the people leaped to their feet on hearing the President's order, the supposed Madame Danglars gave a quick start and held her hands tightly against her bosom, but not a cry escaped her; she did not even raise her head, but remained seated, gazing stonily beneath her vail at the floor of the court-room.

CHAPTER 1.

BENEDETTO'S TRANSFORMATION.

THE accused did not appear immediately and the delay, trifling as it was, augmented the impatience of the crowd in the court-room. What was the trouble? Had Benedetto escaped? No; that was impossible—he had been too closely watched night and day. Had he found means to commit suicide? No; that was equally impossible. A thousand other wild suppositions were indulged in, only to be promptly discarded.

The brief respite gave Beauchamp time to think. He glanced at the lawyers and journalists present and then at the court officials standing idly at their posts. He thought of Benedetto's haughty bearing at the first trial, recalling the unblushing audacity with which the impudent scoundrel had hurled his startling assertion into the midst of the amazed assemblage:

"My father is here! He is Monsieur de Villefort, the Procureur du Roi!"

Beauchamp glanced toward the spot the Procureur had occupied, as if he expected to behold the pallid, agitated countenance of the public officer where Fate had suddenly laid its heavy hand upon him and remorselessly stricken him, but he saw only a substitute, a stout man with a nose hooked like an eagle's beak.

At that instant a low murmur ran through the dense

crowd. Three gendarmes entered and in their midst was Benedetto.

Every eye was fixed upon the hardened desperado.

Beauchamp was so astonished at the change in his appearance, that an exclamation of astonishment rose to his lips and was with great difficulty prevented from breaking forth.

Château-Renaud was equally amazed.

The haughty, arrogant man, who as the Prince Cavalcanti had figured so prominently in the most dazzling circles of high Parisian society, was haughty and arrogant no longer. He was thoroughly and radically changed. His crafty Italian features were unaltered, but his once sparkling eyes had a leaden look and his eyelids drooped, producing a strange effect; black ringlets, those wonderful black ringlets, had ceased to drape his pale and lofty forehead, for his hair was cropped short like a convict's. His long, delicate and slender hands were crossed on his breast, and his entire bearing indicated profound humility and submission. The showy garments of other days were gone and Benedetto's shapely figure was attired with the utmost plainness.

In obedience to a rude push from one of the gendarmes, the accused meekly took the place he was to occupy, and stood there with his head bent and his eyes fastened upon the floor.

His lawyer strove to encourage him and told him somewhat impatiently to bear stiffly up, but Benedetto merely shrugged his shoulders, saying almost in a whisper that he relied upon a merciful God.

"I was not prepared for this singular transformation. What could have caused it?" whispered Château-Renaud to Beauchamp.

Benedetto sat down, and the act of accusation was read at the command of the President.

The act was very brief. It charged Benedetto with the murder of Caderousse, alluding to the first trial and its interruption by Monsieur de Villefort's amazing revelation, which was followed by the Procureur's madness and his wife's tragic death by her own hand. In short it smoothed over Benedetto's crimes and magnified those of his unfortunate father.

"It is Monsieur de Villefort, rather than his son who is on trial!" muttered Beauchamp, between his teeth.

When the act had been read, the President addressed the accused.

"Stand up," he said.

Benedetto obeyed with an air of touching resignation.

"What is your name?"

"Benedetto."

"Do you admit committing the murder with which you are charged?"

"Alas! I have no other course; I am only too guilty!" replied the accused, sobbing and covering his face with his hands.

"Why, the scoundrel is simply playing a rôle! What a farce!" growled Beauchamp.

As each question was put, Benedetto answered unhesitatingly. He admitted everything, and fell back upon his repentance, concluding by saying:

"I await the justice of God and man! I have, indeed, been a great sinner!"

There was very little for the jury to do; their task was plain. Benedetto avowed his crime and his record could not be worse.

"Crier, call the witnesses," said the President.

The first called was the Count of Monte-Cristo. Grim silence followed the crier's shout.

"Monte-Cristo not in court!" said the President, at length. "This is strange, considering the deep interest he has in the case. Was he summoned in due form?"

"He was," answered the substitute, glancing over the papers on the table before him, "but he has disposed of all his property in Paris and vanished, leaving not a single clue to his present whereabouts.'

The President assumed a grave look. "Let the other witnesses be called," he said.

They appeared in turn and gave their testimony. It was without flaw and hinged well together. These persons had distinctly heard the shrieks uttered by the victim, Caderousse, on the fatal occasion of the burglary at Monte-Cristo's residence. They were present when the assassinated man was found with the murderous weapon—the bloody dagger—yet sticking in the mortal wound in his breast. No evidence could be clearer or more convincing. All was evidently over with Benedetto.

"Do you wish to interrogate the witnesses?" demanded the President, turning to Benedetto.

"No," was the solemn reply. "The witnesses are

honest citizens, and every word they have said is God's truth!"

This outburst elicited unmistakable tokens of approval from the excited audience, but the President promptly and sternly silenced the applause. It was, however, plain that Benedetto's unreserved contrition had created a popular sentiment in his favor.

"Call Noirtier de Villefort," said the President.

As the crier shouted the mad Procureur's name, a thrill of excitement ran through the vast, compact crowd. Beauchamp was scandalized. He started from the bench upon which he had been sitting with Château-Renaud, and muttered: "How cruel to summon that unfortunate man!"

The President deemed a word of explanation expedient. He, therefore, addressed the jury:

"Using the discretionary power vested in the court," he said, in a tone of marked solemnity and impressiveness, "we have summoned Monsieur de Villefort to testify at the bar of this tribunal. We thought proper to do so for form's sake, that all the legal requirements may be fully complied with, but, at the same time, we cannot hope to elicit anything of importance from him. His mental condition precludes that."

This speech aided Benedetto, for it recalled to the minds of all present that the father's cruel abandonment of his son had forced the latter into the descending path that led to crime.

Amid profound silence the door of the witness-room was thrown open. An instant later Monsieur de Villefort confronted Benedetto.

CHAPTER II.

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH.

MONSIEUR DE VILLEFORT was not alone With him was Doctor d'Avrigny, who had given him the protection of his white hair and honorable name.

Villefort was bowed and crushed, reminding one of those accursed cities on which has fallen fire from heaven.

He had become bald; his mouth was drawn, and his cheek bones were prominent, like those of a skeleton, while his eyes were deeply sunk.

He was a terrible ruin.

So great was the impression produced upon the judges, upon the lawyers, and upon all who had known him and seen him only a few months before, cold and haughty, as well as fiercely energetic in his pursuit of crime, that they started to their feet. Some among the crowd bowed their heads as if a funeral were passing.

The President himself, who looked very little like a sentimental man, spoke in a somewhat unsteady voice to the jury.

"Gentlemen, Dr. d'Avrigny, who watches Monsieur de Villefort with admirable solicitude, accompanies

him. We are assured by this physician that this step will do the invalid no harm. Doctor, you see no reason to change this opinion?"

"None whatever," answered the old doctor, in whose arms had died by poison, one after the other, every member of this family.

At a sign from the magistrate, he touched the arm of De Villefort and, saying a few words to him, they advanced into the room.

A hussar brought an arm-chair, amid profound silence.

The vailed lady half rose, and drawing close over her face the thick folds that covered it, gazed with eyes the fire of which penetrated the lace, at the man who had been so pitiless to all, and who had fallen so low that now every one pitied him.

Benedetto, who appeared to be violently agitated, extended his arms, and then sank down again on his seat, and covered his face with his hands.

"Monsieur de Villefort," began the President.

But the madman raised his hand, as if to demand silence.

Now, like a man who awakens from a profound sleep, he looked around with his eyes opened unnaturally wide. Some strange work was going on in his disordered brain.

Where was he? All the surroundings were familiar. Opposite was the crucifix, and the form he had so repeatedly invoked when seeking to induce criminals to tell the truth. Under the crucifix sat the same judges, who had so often given the decisions he desired,

and there was the same jury whom he had held breathless under the fire and force of his implacable arguments. And there, too, was the criminal.

It was all like a forgotten picture appearing under a slowly lifted vail.

The former Procureur de Roi rose suddenly to his feet, and extended his hand with the gesture he had formerly employed when, at the end of an argument, he uttered those words which caused a head to fall.

In this pantomime there was something sinister and solemn.

The snow was falling fast without, and dashing against the window panes. The light in the hall was peculiar, and Villefort looked like a spectre.

The President made another effort to control the emotion that choked his utterance.

"Do you understand me, Monsieur de Villefort?" he asked, at last, "and are you ready to answer the question I am about to address to you?

Villefort inclined his head.

"Yes," he said, in guttural tones.

"Benedetto," the President continued, turning to the accused as he spoke, "Benedetto, rise."

Benedetto obeyed.

"Look at Monsieur de Villefort, and speaking truthfully, say if you stand ready to repeat the statements made at the last session of the court."

Either a great transformation had taken place in the nature of Benedetto or he was a most able actor, for at these words the muscles of his face contracted and tears, real tears, rolled down his cheeks. He

extended his clasped hands towards Monsieur de Villefort, and murmured, in a voice half choked by convulsive utterance: "Pardon! my father! oh! pardon!"

"What is that man saying?" asked Monsieur de Villefort, suddenly, in clear, steady tones, like those with which that room had been familiar from his lips in former days.

"He called you his father," answered the President. "Did you not yourself recognize him, and admit before a crowded audience that the accused was your son?"

Villefort passed his hand over his brow in a confused sort of way.

"My son! And is he living? Children were some times killed under my roof. No. My boy is dead."

"Do you remember the night of the 27th and 28th September, 1817!"

Monsiur de Villefort started.

"Yes, I remember. I killed him then."

"Not so. He escaped from you in the most miraculous manner. Do you not remember?"

"No. It was not miraculous. I was struck by a dagger, and the assassin vanished. Oh! I remember!"

And Villefort laughed shrilly.

"And you admit this man to be your son?"

"Son—Villefort's son? He has a right to the name, for he has been a forger and a murderer. It is just. I remember it all: the house at Auteuil, the red chamber, the napkin marked with an H and an N. I remember it all! I admit it all! The blood of the Villeforts runs in the veins of an assassin!"

And looking at Benedetto, he said, as he pointed at him with his long thin finger:

"Yes you are my son! You have committed one murder. It will not be the last!"

Benedetto raised his head with an air of pride.

"You are mistaken, my father," he said, in clear, steady tones. I have certainly been a great criminal. But God himself enjoins repentance, and promises to forgive those who bow under his chastening hand. I ask and expect nothing from mankind. I know my fate. But now, while awaiting my sentence of death, I say loudly, in order that I may be heard by all, Monsieur de Villefort, I forgive you, and I ask God to be merciful unto you!"

This romantic tirade was given with a solemnity and pathos that would have been creditable to the greatest artist.

"I forgive you," continued Benedetto, "as I forgive her whom I have never known. She was not your accomplice, perhaps, but she has been ashamed of me all this time."

A long shivering sigh broke the profound silence; the vailed woman pressed closer to the side of the man who accompanied her, while he, seizing both her hands in his, held them tightly while he whispered in her ear, "Take care!"

This incident passed unobserved in the concentration of attention upon Benedetto, who continued with an air of excitement, and eyes uplifted to heaven:

"I forgive everybody, and ask only God's forgiveness for myself."

"Doctor," said the President, "you can take your patient away. It was necessary that he should be seen here by the jury, who must decide for themselves as to the degree of confidence to be accorded to the avowal of Monsieur de Villefort, and the declarations of the accused."

Then addressing the former magistrate, he said:

"If my words, Monsieur de Villefort, touch your heart, it may be that they will bring improvement to your sick soul. God has struck you through your family, and by depriving you of your reason, proves once more that crime, however hidden, is sooner or later disclosed."

Dr. D'Avrigny lightly touched the shoulder of his patient. "Come," he said.

But Villefort shook his head, and pushing back his chair he took two or three steps in the direction of his former seat. It seemed to him that this place was still his.

His substitute shrank back, almost as if he feared that he should be dispossessed by this living ghost; at the same moment hastily laid his large hand upon a huge pile of papers. But Villefort stopped short and turned toward the jury.

His features had resumed all the magisterial rigidity which had formerly characterized them.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, in clear, ringing tones, "you have heard this man. You have heard the words of penitence he has uttered. He lies, gentlemen of the jury—he lies!"

"Monsieur de Villefort!" cried the President.

Let me go on. I am mad, it is said, and it may be that they are right, for I hear strange noises, and my sight is often obscured by a red mist; but through this mist I sometimes see a light, as I do at this moment; and by this light I read the soul of this man, who is my son, and whom I tried to murder."

The words of Monsieur de Villefort were so distinct and emphatic that it was impossible to doubt that he was restored to sanity, even if it were but for a brief period.

"I say again that this man has lied," he continued, raising his voice as if to be heard in the remotest corner of the court-room. "No, he feels not the smallest repentance! No, he never forgives! No, he has no belief in a merciful God. This man is playing an infamous comedy. I know what I am saying. This man feels no remorse; he thinks only of saving his head. Some one has suggested this course to him, and he is simply playing a part which he has carefully prepared. Gentlemen of the jury, take care. Your responsibility is enormous. When a tiger emerges from his lair, he must be shot through the heart without delay. This man is a human tiger. You have at your disposal, law and justice. Use them both. *I, the father of this man, demand that you sentence him to death!*"

There was a cry of horror from the audience. This father, mad though he were, asking for the death of his son, was a most terrible sight.

Villefort's insanity, moreover, was lost sight of, and

the people present thought of him only as another Brutus.

Villefort had uttered his last words, "demand that you sentence him to death," in a voice so sonorous, that its echo lingered several seconds. He waited until there was absolute silence, then, after bowing low to the Bench, left the court-room with the Doctor.

"Never was Villefort clearer-headed," whispered Beauchamp in the ear of Château-Renaud.

"Why does Madame Danglars seem to be so deeply interested in this reprobate?" asked Château-Renaud, hastily.

"What! Is it really she?"

"She nearly fainted a few minutes ago. And, you remember, she did the same and worse at the last trial."

"Nerves, I suppose."

"Heart, rather, I fancy."

"Do you mean——"

"That Cavalcanti was a very handsome fellow, and that Madame Danglars has never been looked upon as a paragon of virtue."

"Hush! the Procureur du Roi is about to speak. I am ready to wager that he won't be half as sensible as the madman."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE JOURNEY.

LOVE of contrasts is a strong characteristic in human nature.

The Procureur du Roi had been greatly irritated by the unexpected intrusion of Monsieur de Villefort, and but for the respect which he felt for the President, he would have protested violently against the deplorable weakness shown by the Bench in not ordering the madman to be at once removed. Therefore, in order to oppose Villefort and, perhaps, to give a lesson to the too complaisant magistrates, the Procureur showed himself as indulgent as possible to Benedetto, and reserved the thunders of his wrath for the unnatura. father.

Beauchamp again took occasion to ask his friend if it were not Villefort who was to be sentenced to death.

The vehement words of the madman had affected the audience very differently from what the Procureur would have expected, had he been in a state to reason calmly.

All the sympathy, all the pity was felt for Benedetto —for this victim of an infamous father, whose ferocious hatred pursued him to the scaffold.

Caderousse was of secondary importance. He was

dead, to be sure, and he was run through the heart with a knife; but he was a small loss to society. Then, too, who could say that it was Benedetto, and not Villefort himself, who had committed the murder?

"Let us not be carried away by pity," concluded the Procureur, "for these unscrupulous men, who, soiling their judicial ermine by indulgence in criminal passions, sacrifice the honor of families and the lives of the wretched children who are born to them!"

The task of Benedetto's advocate was thus singularly simplified. Villefort was violently attacked, and Benedetto elevated to the rank of martyr and victim.

"As the eloquent Procureur has just forcibly stated," said Benedetto's counsel, "the penalty of crimes should be paid by their true authors. Benedetto was thrown upon the world without assistance or friends. Did he ever receive that teaching without which souls are not brave, nor hearts honest? No. By the fault of this man who has acknowledged himself to be the father of my client, he has suffered every provocation, and been subjected to every temptation."

Then, with sudden pathos infused into his voice, the lawyer continued:

"But, gentlemen of the jury, since he has been lying in his lonely prison cell the holy words of God's minister have fallen like gentle dew on this stony heart, and new sentiments have sprung to life there. The weeds have been torn up and the good seeds left to grow; and now, when this man is a man indeed, worthy to take his place in the world and do his share of life's labors, now it is, I say, that the pitiless fangs of the

law fasten upon him once more. God has heard him. God compassionates men, and yet you would tear him from that life of repentance for which God has preserved him. No, gentlemen of the jury. No—a thousand times, no!"

Benedetto listened to all this in an attitude of lowly compunction, and when the lawyer, in a magnificent peroration, showed his client rehabilitated and resuming the place in the world to which he was entitled after a long continuance in well doing, the Corsican threw himself on his knees and with passionate sobs exclaimed, as he beat his breast:

"My God! Shall I ever be worthy of such happiness?"

Some of the more tender gentlemen of the jury wiped away their tears, and when they retired to the Council Chamber their deliberation was but brief. They slowly re-appeared.

"Yes, the accused was guilty, but with extenuating circumstances."

Loud applause from the audience.

The President frowned and called for order, remarking that no marks of approbation or disapproval were permitted, and then ordered the accused to be brought in.

Benedetto, pale but dignified, was again brought in.

When he heard the verdict, his emotion was so great that he clutched the arm of a police officer for support.

"Have you anything to say?" asked the President

"No, nothing," murmured Benedetto.

"The court condemns this man, Benedetto, known also as Andrea Cavalcanti, to hard labor at the galleys for life."

This sentence was to have been expected; it was the logical sequence of events, and yet a murmur of surprise ran through the court room.

Benedetto, on the contrary, smiled serenely, but suddenly a lurid light sprang to his eyes.

He was eagerly seeking some one in the compact crowd.

The man who was with Madame Danglars, and who with the stealthy movements of a serpent had glided through the group of lawyers who were congratulating Benedetto's counsel on saving his client from the scaffold, and now had succeeded in reaching the dock, leaned over the bar and said to the criminal in a low voice:

"We have kept our word!"

"But the galleys, the galleys!"

"Patience!"

"Take care!" growled Benedetto. "You swore to save me—"

"Your head, only—what more do you ask?"

Benedetto uttered an oath. The spirit of revolt had broken loose within him.

At this moment he was suddenly pulled back by a police officer, who saw without hearing this singular colloquy.

With a violent effort Benedetto restrained himself.

"I follow you, gentlemen," he said quietly, and the door closed upon him.

He stood in the ante-room. Handcuffs were placed on his wrists. He uttered another low oath.

"You ought to be thankful," said the jailer, "that you have escaped so well."

Benedetto shrugged his shoulders, and seeming to pay no attention to what went on around him, he walked out between two officers.

"Where are you taking me?"

"To the prison," answered one of them laughing, "and to-morrow morning, bright and early, you will start for Bicêtre."

Bicêtre! The first step to the galleys.

Benedetto knew this. Instinctively he looked up at the walls as if to discern some issue by which he could dash out into the street.

He found himself in a narrow corridor, preceded by two officers and followed by two more. Any attempt at escape was the maddest folly.

Suddenly he felt the fresh air blowing in his face; big flakes of snow were falling. He was pushed into a carriage, the door was closed violently, and the horses started off at full gallop.

Andrea Cavalcanti had vanished; he was now Benedetto the *forçat*.

The drive was not long, and yet how many tumultuous thoughts surged through the head of the miserable man. He was saved—at least, he was not to die!

A strange occult influence of which he had been for

some time conscious had saved him, and torn him from the very foot of the scaffold. But why had not this protection gone further? why had it not been still more efficacious?

His head was safe, to be sure. But he was to resume that frightful life at the galleys and feel once more that terrible weight on his ankle, and on his waist, and that dread companionship night and day!

And this after he had been called Prince Andrea Cavalcanti for months. After he had been the idol of the prettiest women in Paris, after he had scattered gold to the right and the left with the most lavish prodigality, and after he had so nearly become the husband of one of the wealthiest heiresses in France It is true that Benedetto's lawyer had kept him informed of the catastrophe which had engulfed the Danglars and their wealth. He knew, too, that Eugénie Danglars had fled from the paternal mansion with her friend and confidante, Mademoiselle d'Armilly, and he remembered the crowning insult he had offered her in the inn. But all this was life! The galleys meant death to him.

With what bitter rage Benedetto looked back upon the past. He remembered how at the summons of the Abbé Busoni he had hastened to Paris to be received by the Count of Monte-Cristo as the last of the Cavalcantis, and then how finally he had been pressed to the breast of Bartolomeo Cavalcanti and greeted as a son.

Then the sombre figure of Caderousse, the murder,

the arrest, and the prison where Benedetto, discouraged and hopeless, heard the true story of his birth from Bertuccio, that terrible story which drove Villefort to despair and madness. How far away all this seemed! And Benedetto in sullen rage said to himself that he had been a dupe, a mere instrument in the hands of a will stronger than his own.

And whose was this will?

A name rose to Benedetto's lips. Yes—there was one man in the world who, while bestowing gold upon him with full hands, watched him with a smile of contempt. This man was the direct cause of his arrest — that is to say, of his ruin. This man had bought the house in which he—Benedetto—was born, in which Monsieur de Villefort had buried him alive, and in which he had assembled his guests and spoken to them of this murder. This monster, who had put all this sinister machinery in motion, where Benedetto and Villefort had been crushed, was none other than the Count of Monte-Cristo!

Uttering this name through his teeth, the Corsican bit his lips until the blood came. He shivered from head to foot with rage, and thoughts of vengeance seethed in his brain, while at the same time he felt an insurmountable terror as he thought of this man with his pale, calm face, and of the millions of which he disposed as he passed through life like an avenging angel.

In vain did Benedetto struggle against this overwhelming impression.

What could he now do? How could he wage war against this man, now that he was a convict?

Benedetto clenched his hands. Oh! for money and liberty! How he would avenge himself on the world by which he had been punished, and above all, upon this hated Count of Monte-Cristo!

The carriage stopped.

The prison was reached where he was to pass the night.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONVICT.

IN spite of all Benedetto's effrontery, he could not repress a start when he heard his name called out by the brutal voice of the jailer. Up to this moment he had looked upon himself as the Prince Andrea Cavalcanti — now, he was nameless, or worse than nameless, Benedetto the convict, who was presently to become a mere number. Jailers, as a rule, understand and observe these *nuances*—they respect him whom the law has not yet given over to them. But as soon as sentence is pronounced, their whole manner changes —the man is now absolutely theirs.

If, however, Benedetto had been condemned to death, they would have treated him with a certain deference, that deference paid to those who were about to die by the Roman Cæsar himself.

But a *convict!* Pshaw!

And Benedetto, who was by nature a close observer, recognized this delicate distinction.

He was roughly hustled down the corridor, and into a low, narrow room, where beds were placed upon the floor and occupied by such prisoners as were to be transferred to Bicêtre the next morning. A huge lantern, like those we see hung upon locomotives, with a

huge reflector, illuminated the repulsive scene. A jailer, wearing a felt hat pulled down over his brow said to Benedetto, in a surly tone:

"Lie down!"

"And where am I to lie?" asked Benedetto.

"Where you choose—where you can. Do you want me to tuck you in?"

"But why need I lie down?"

"Do as you choose, but you must not make a noise. Take off your boots, for if I hear you, you will be sorry!"

He added, ironically:

"These gentlemen, you know, must not be disturbed!"

These gentlemen were the convicts, who lifted their heads to look at the new-comer.

Suddenly a voice was heard.

"Come this way—here is a place!"

"What is that you say?" roared the jailer, lifting his club.

"I beg your pardon!" murmured the man who had spoken, "but there is a little straw here."

"Take care of your own affairs!" was the rough reply, as the jailer pushed Benedetto toward the place to which the man pointed.

Powerless to resist, and possibly glad of a little repose after the repeated shocks of the last twenty-four hours, Benedetto sank on the straw, and stretching himself out, closed his eyes.

The jailer, grumbling to himself at having been disturbed, went back to the further end of the room,

where was a little camp bed. He was soon comfortably snoring, with that facility for sleep with which some persons are fortunately endowed. Benedetto did his best not to think. He felt utterly crushed. He could not sleep, although he longed for repose and forgetfulness.

Suddenly, he felt a hand touch him. Instinctively he drew back in terror and disgust, but he could not go far, for some one lay just beyond him.

Then he heard some one speaking in a singular voice, that voice used by old criminals, which permits them to communicate with those next to them without being heard by the guard.

This voice was strangely sweet.

"You ought to rejoice!" said this unknown comrade. "You have had great luck. To whom do you owe it I don't know, I am sure, and yet I am the man—perhaps you have forgotten me—who took you that note two months since."

"You!—was it you?"

"Hush! you must not talk in that voice—it sounds like a trumpet. Listen to me—I will tell you the whole story. I was in prison—never mind why, it is neither here nor there. A lady wanted to go over the institution. She took a fancy to my face—not an uncommon thing with me—and she managed, unknown to the jailer, to slip a note into my hand, with a very pretty gold piece."

"She is rich, then?"

"Hush! You must learn to talk. But we shall have plenty of time down there."

"Down where?" asked Benedetto, with a shiver.

"Why, at Toulon, of course; an excellent climate for weak lungs, my boy, and my lungs are weak."

And the man, whose face Benedetto could not see, laughed a sinister laugh.

"Go on. You were saying that this lady—"

"Thinks much of you. She is not young, I must admit; in the forties, I should say, and I like the teens better, myself."

"Well, go on, if you know anything more."

"You need not be impatient. The lady told me a good deal in a whisper and in a minute or two. 'For Benedetto,' she said. At that time I had not the smallest idea who Benedetto was, but I felt sure that my gold piece would give me inspiration. I have always been honest. I never wronged a human being out of a cent."

The convict said this with evident pride.

"Then why are you here?" asked Benedetto.

"The truth is, I was a priest, and in the confessional—"

Benedetto had been brought up in Corsica, and in spite of all his infamy he retained certain prejudices. He shrugged his shoulders in disgust, but the other did not seem to see this. He continued:

"I said to the lady, 'yes, I will do it,' and it seems that my voice pleased her as much as my face, for she gave me another louis. Now, I don't care to undertake commissions without knowing what I am doing, so that I felt that I ought to read that letter."

"You broke the seal?"

"Yes, and read the letter. I can repeat its contents word for word: 'Some one who is interested in Benedetto wishes him to know that if, during his imprisonment, he sees a good deal of a priest and gives certain signs of conversion and piety, he may be sure of not being condemned to death.'"

"Yes, that was the letter," murmured Benedetto.

"The affair was none of my business, of course. The only thing I had to do with it was to honestly earn my two gold pieces, and so I never rested until I found you."

"But I do not remember having seen you."

"I found a simple way of getting the note to you, and after that I heard that you carefully followed the advice that had been given you, as is proved by your being here."

Benedetto could not repress a movement of impatience. The dictatorial tone of his fellow-convict was disagreeable to him.

"I understand your impatience," the man continued. "You are thinking that you know this story better than I do, and you are right; and you are considering what motive I have for telling it to you."

"Precisely," muttered Benedetto.

"It is because one service demands another in return.'

"What can I do for you? I have no privileges."

"You are very inexperienced, my dear boy; but I know what I know. You have been very obedient to the instructions conveyed in the letter. We shall be side by side at Toulon; nevertheless, your piety entitles you to some privileges. Women and Jesuits are tena-

cious, and you have to do with both women and Jesuits."

It seemed to Benedetto that a flash of lightning passed before his eyes. In all the excitement of his trial he had forgotten many things, or had, at all events, ceased to reason upon them. And ever since he received the mysterious note, he had acted strictly in accordance with its suggestions and played the part of a submissive and repentant convict. Suddenly his lot had been ameliorated. The faces about him had softened. A man, the same who had addressed him just before he was removed from the court-room, had one morning passed him in the corridor and said as he did so, "Do not forget the instructions you have received, and you are saved."

He had obeyed, for Benedetto was greatly afraid of death. Everything had worked to his advantage. The President had shown him positive partiality. Villefort's appearance had been of great service; the pique of the Procureur du Roi had done him good and he had not been condemned to death. And when the unknown protector had spoken to him as he stood in the dock a prisoner, Benedetto had felt ready to insult him. He wondered why he had been liberated. Would he be allowed to go to the galleys? He doubted it. There might be still a future in store for him. He turned to his companion.

"Go on," he said, breathlessly.

"Will you agree to serve me?"

"Yes—yes."

"And you promise never to betray me?"

"What interest should I have in doing so?"

The convict sneered.

"You are frank!" he said. "If it were to your interest to betray me, you would do so; of that I am sure. But it will be better for you to serve me. In fact, if you do what I ask—"

"Go on."

"No, I will tell you the rest at Toulon. At present you must listen and ask no questions. To-morrow some one will come. You must ask as a last favor that a letter which I will give you may be sent to its address."

"I will do so."

One word more. I told you that I had read your note. You may be tempted to return the compliment."

"No; I am not capable of such baseness."

"Pshaw! a man is capable of anything, and you are a man. There is the letter."

Benedetto saw a hand advance from the shadow.

"This letter is written in cipher; you cannot read it, if you would. The name of the person to whom it is addressed—all you need to know—is Monsieur Magloire, No. 1, Rue Contrescarpe. I am sure of you, you see, because my precautions are well taken. But do as I ask, and you will not regret it."

"Rely on me."

"Yes, all the more that I now tell you that the safe and prompt delivery of this little note ensures our escape. I say our, for, like a poor man's dinner, where there is enough for one there is enough for two."

At this moment the door was thrown open and a voice called: "Benedetto! Benedetto!"

CHAPTER V.

MOTHER AND SON.

BENEDETTO started to his feet. This unexpected summons, coming as it did at the moment when the unknown had inspired him with hope, seemed to be a confirmation.

He quickly hid the letter in his breast, then going into the middle of the room he was met by the jailer, loudly grumbling at this unwonted disturbance, but when this man had spoken to the one who had called, his manner changed.

"Oh!" he muttered, "that is all right, if you come with an order from him."

Benedetto sneered as he passed.

"Wait a bit, my fine bird," muttered the jailer, "see how you will feel with the ball and chain!"

"Why am I called?" asked Benedetto. But no answer was vouchsafed; his arm was grasped, and he was hurried down the corridor.

It was still early, but the prisoners were always locked in their cells at seven o'clock, consequently Benedetto saw no one and heard no noise as he passed along. Suddenly the new-born hope with which he had been exalted vanished. The black frowning walls had crushed and swallowed it.

A door was thrown open.

"Go in," said the guard, pushing Benedetto through the door, who found himself in the parlor, as the square room divided in the centre by a close grating, was called.

The division in which he stood was lighted only by a smoky lamp, the reflector of which was turned in such a way that the light was concentrated upon himself, while the other half of the room beyond the grating was in absolute darkness.

Several minutes elapsed. Benedetto was entirely alone.

He thought of the commission entrusted to him by his unknown companion. He felt in his breast for the paper, and drawing it out found it was gray in tint and coarse in quality. The address was legibly written. Benedetto studied it attentively. Was not this simple paper a talisman? It was apparently sealed with an ordinary wafer. At this moment he heard a key turn in the lock. The door on the other side of the grating was opened.

Benedetto saw a dark shadow, but that was all. This shadow, however, was unmistakably that of a woman. There was a long silence, broken only by a panting breath.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" asked Benedetto, at last.

"I want—" the woman began, but a sob choked her.

"Are you afraid of me?" asked Benedetto.

"No, I am not afraid," answered the woman, gently. "Come nearer the light, that I may see you."

"You do not know me."

"Then why are you here?'

"I come from a person who is greatly interested in you."

'Can it be that any one is interested in me?"

"Have you forgotten the advice by which you are saved?"

"Then it was you who sent me that note?"

"Yes, two months since."

"Ah! yes; you are a woman of forty—"

"How do you know my age?" asked the woman, in evident terror.

"And you give gold pieces to people to take your letters! I know all about that, but I wish to know more. For whom do you act?"

"For a woman you do not know."

"But whose name at least, I desire to know."

"I am not authorized to give it to you."

"Tell me, at least, if she is rich?"

"She was, but, alas, she is so no longer."

"Then I do not wish to know her."

"Benedetto, listen to me. Is there not one poor woman who needs your forgiveness?"

Benedetto laughed.

"There may be. I have forgiven everybody. My Christian charity is wonderful. I have become a model youth. I have forgiven my most excellent father—"

"And another person."

"Ah! to be sure, my mother, you mean."

"Yes, your mother. You have forgiven her?"

Benedetto grasped the grating in his nervous hands.

"You are my mother!" he cried.

"No, no! You are mistaken!"

"So much the worse, then!" answered Benedetto, sullenly. "You know her, however; tell her, then, that I lied, that I do not forgive her, and that I will never forgive her!"

"Benedetto!"

"Remember my message, and bear it faithfully to my mother. This lady, and she is a great lady, I am sure, is an adulteress. She was the mistress of that scoundrel, Villefort, who presumed to sit in judgment upon others!"

Sobs, bitter and despairing, reached his ear.

"Why do you weep, if you are not my mother?" asked Benedetto, with a sneer.

"Your mother," said the stranger, "is a sinful woman."

"Yes, to save herself, she decided to kill her child."

"No, it is not true," cried the woman, turning toward the grating, and clutching it with shaking hands.

Benedetto caught her wrist.

"I know!" he cried, "Villefort made her believe that the child was dead, and he carried it away and buried it alive."

"Alas! Alas!"

"How can you know this, if you are not my mother? But there is not one word of truth in this cunningly devised fable. I hate this woman!"

"Do not say that!"

"I hate her because she desired my death."

"No, no! It is not true."

"I hate her because, through her, my life has been made a wreck. And after leaving me to become a forger and an assassin, she has not come near me."

"She did not know you."

"It is false. She was afraid of exposing her position. I do more than hate her—I curse her!"

"No! No!" and the poor woman dragged herself across the floor on her knees again to the grating.

Until this moment Benedetto had spoken in a low voice, in order not to attract the attention of the guard, whose measured footfall they heard in the corridor.

"Why do you weep, if you are not my mother?"

The woman drew back, with a low groan, but she did not rise from her knees.

"I do not blame you, mother," said Benedetto, bitterly. "Each for himself in this world. I was in your way. You were quite right to get rid of me. I should have done the same."

The woman shrank away in terror.

"This is no time for sentiment," he continued. "You are my mother; you are rich; you are unhappy; your conscience stings you. I know that you are a woman of position and elegance. You have contrived to save my life; you have influence, therefore. Let us reason together—my dear mother. You must find a way of getting me out of my troubles."

The woman drew her vail closer over her face, and drew back into the shadow.

"It is impossible!" she said firmly.

"There is no such word in the French language! I have established three points—you are my mother, you are penitent, you are rich."

"I have already told you that you are mistaken that your mother was rich but is now poor."

"I do not believe you."

"I tell you, that to save you from the scaffold she has surrendered all she has in the world."

"I do not believe you."

"I assure you, that the protection of those who were powerful enough to save your life was bought at a heavy sacrifice. Your mother, until a few months ago, was ignorant of your existence, and on that terrible day in the court room, when the ghastly secret was revealed to her, she nearly died."

Benedetto laughed.

"From that moment she had but one thought—how to save you from the scaffold. But for that, she would have fled from France, for her means were ample."

"I knew it!" cried Benedetto.

"But they are so no longer, for she gave everything to those who have saved your life, and— But away with falsehoods! I am your mother, and, to see you to-night, I have signed the paper which dispossesses me of my fortune."

"Then you were mad!" muttered Benedetto. "And you call that bringing me consolation and encouragement! You had better have come here with a hundred thousand francs, and bribed the jailers. Don't you see that the fortune you have surren-

dered was my liberty, and my life? But I do not believe you."

Benedetto's anger became more and more intense.

"I hate you! I curse you! Go and lead your life of luxury and pleasure," he continued.

"Do you know what this life will be?" asked the woman, in a firm voice. "It is well that you should understand. In a month I shall leave France. I shall go with the Sisters of Saint Crucifix to Asia Minor, where I shall be the humblest among them. We will build a convent with the gold I have surrendered to the Jesuit Fathers, and I shall die in one of its cells, without a person near me who can utter a word of consolation. This is my future lot."

"This is certainly a most ingenious explanation, sneered Benedetto. "Then the Jesuits have your money?"

"I have signed the paper, and in a month, before I leave France they will be in possession of every sou I have in the world."

"Then it is not yet in their hands?"

"Not all; but from this day forth it is no longer mine."

Benedetto was silent. He was brooding over a new idea.

"The hour that has been granted me is over," said the miserable woman. "Farewell, Benedetto. I have done for you all that was possible. I would have been most thankful could I have taken away with me one word of forgiveness from you. It is not your fault, however: I see that you are made so."

The poor woman sobbed bitterly, and though she raised her vail to wipe away her tears, her face was still in shadow.

Suddenly she heard the word, uttered in a low, tender voice:

"Mother!"

She started. Was it really Benedetto who had spoken? Benedetto, who had only a moment before heaped insults upon her?

"Mother!" repeated Benedetto, "you have touched my stony heart. Misfortunes have embittered me. But I am not ungrateful. We are about to separate forever. Give me your hand, I implore you."

Benedetto's voice was so gentle and persuasive that she approached the grating and passed her hand through the bars. He took it, and after kissing it tenderly, held it firmly in his.

"I have one favor to ask of you," he said.

"Heaven grant that it may be in my power!"

"You said that you were to leave France in a month."

"Yes; on the 26th of February."

"And you sail, of course, from Marseilles?"

"Yes."

"And you will then be very near me at Toulon. Oh! I implore you to come there, and say a word to me. I know that you do not wish me to see your face or learn your name, but what does it matter? I swear that the secret shall always remain one—but to see you once again; oh! my mother, grant me this favor."

The poor woman felt her heart grow warm at these words from the lips of this consummate actor. She believed that an absolute transformation had been wrought in him, and forgave his curses and insults.

"I promise to see you once more before I sail on the 26th."

"Then you will be at Toulon on the 25th? and," he added, with an air of indifference, "it is on the 25th that you surrender your fortune to the Jesuits? Am I not right, mother?"

The word "mother" filled the woman's heart with joy, and she attached little importance to the question.

"You are right," she replied.

"Come to Toulon, then, on the 24th. I wish you to fix the day now, so that I may manage not to be sent away from the prison on outside work. Oh! mother, with what mingled sorrow and hope I shall expect you. Swear that you will not disappoint me on the 24th of February."

"I swear!"

"Thanks, dear mother; let me kiss your hand once more. You can do me one service, a very simple one, only to drop a letter into the post-box. It is a mere letter of farewell to a man to whom I am under great obligations."

She could not refuse. She had forgotten her distrust and caution, and as she slipped the note into her bosom the light fell full on her face.

Benedetto recognized Madame Danglars, the wife of the banker, whose daughter he had come so near marrying.

With difficulty he repressed the cry of rage and astonishment that rose to his lips.

"Farewell," he murmured, "do not forget the 24th."

The vailed woman disappeared, and the jailer cried, "Benedetto! Benedetto!"

As the convict took his way back to his pallet, he murmured to himself:

"February 24th. My last card is not yet played.'

CHAPTER VI.

JOURNALISM.

"WELL. Château-Renaud, what is the news to-day?"

"Nothing, except that which comes from the East. Oh! by the way, do you remember the day that the fantastic Count of Monte-Cristo, Comte de Saint Germain, Comte Cagliostro, or whatever you choose to call him, breakfasted with us at our poor friend's, Albert de Morcerf's?"

"Yes; I remember."

"Albert is doing well, and I assure you he will yet make his mark."

At this time, newspaper offices were dark, dingy dens, and Beauchamp, who was editor of the *Impartial*, was sitting amid piles of MS. at a desk which a Norwegian would have recognized as coming from his own land, where mahogany and rosewood were little known.

There came a violent knock at the door.

"What is that?" asked Château-Renaud.

Beauchamp smiled.

One would suppose that a fight was going on in the anteroom," he said, as Château-Renaud opened the door.

The two gentlemen saw one of the office boys struggling with a young man.

"I tell you that you can't go in," cried the Cerberus.

"And I tell you that I shall go in!"

"What is the matter?" asked Beauchamp, making a sign to Cerberus to release his victim, who shook himself like a dog coming out of the water and then, going up to Beauchamp, said, "I knew that I would speak to you."

Beauchamp placed his glass to his eyes, and gravely contemplated this individual, whose costume had sadly suffered in this contest in which he had been engaged.

"You do not recognize me, Monsieur Beauchamp?"

"I confess that I do not."

"And yet I faced you yesterday in the court room. I was on the journalist's bench. I spoke to you two or three times, and you said I was made for a journalist."

"I remember. And also that you came to the restaurant to inform me when the trial came on."

"Precisely."

"That service entitled you to certain privileges. Now, what do you want?"

"First, that you shall administer a reproof to this slave," and as the fellow spoke he scornfully designated the office boy, who looked as if quite ready to spring at his throat again. "To this slave," he repeated, "who has no respect for the thinkers of the day."

Beauchamp and Château-Renaud laughed.

"Never mind!" said the editor of the *Impartial*, "the offence shall not be repeated. Come into my office. I am entirely at your service."

The two friends entered the private office with the new comer, to whom Beauchamp offered a seat.

"No. I prefer standing. Monsieur Beauchamp, you are interested in a man named Benedetto."

"Oh! in a way."

"Enough to induce you to sit all through his trial; and, unless I greatly mistake, you will not be sorry to know what has since taken place."

"Château-Renaud! listen to this," said Beauchamp. "And your name, sir?"

"Gratillet—at your service."

"Then, my dear Gratillet, I will be entirely frank with you. I shall be indeed very glad to hear all you can tell me of this person in question."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Gratillet, triumphantly. Well then, to begin with, yesterday I attached myself to the fortunes of this Benedetto."

"Fortunes seems to me hardly the word to use."

"Well, I don't know. If I were not afraid of being taken for a fool, I would say that this man, convict as he is, has a great destiny before him."

"Pshaw! He has no other horizon than the guillotine! Yesterday evening, Monsieur Benedetto, for we will treat him with respect, received a visitor in his prison."

"Nonsense!"

"It was a lady dressed in black, whose face I could not see, but I have a shrewd conviction that she was not a stranger to a certain banker who vanished some three months since."

Beauchamp and Château-Renaud exchanged a word

"But I am not sure."

"Go on," said Beauchamp.

"The lady remained in the prison an hour, and left it about ten o'clock, and entered her carriage."

"Ah! she had a carriage, then?"

"Only a hired fiâcre!"

"And you took another and followed her.'

"Sir; I am an honest man."

"Then you allowed the carriage to go."

"Certainly, but I went with it."

"How was that?"

"I got up behind."

"This becomes interesting," said Beauchamp.

"I hope so. The lady went to the Rue Contrescarpe, No. 8."

"To see some one?"

"Perhaps, but she did not succeed. Let me tell the story in my own way. This No. 8 is affixed to a small door on which is also a sign—'Magloire, Birds and Animals.' The lady read this sign, and looked for a bell, but finally found a knocker, which she used energetically. No one came, and she tried it again. Then a window opened, and a voice cried:

"'What do you want?'

"The lady replied that she wanted to deliver a letter.

"'From whom?' was the next question.

"I do not know what she said then, for she spoke so low that I could not hear, but I saw a letter in her hand, then the window was suddenly closed. The lady hesitated a moment, and then she went back to the carriage.'

"You with her, of course?"

"No. What did I care to know where she lived. If I need her, I can find her again—she will not be far from Benedetto!"

"Very good reasoning. But I don't see much in your story—a letter handed to some one you did not see."

"Not last night, but this morning."

"Ah. you have seen him since! Have a cigar?"

"With pleasure."

As Gratillet lighted his cigar, he said to Beauchmp:

"You never saw the departure of the convicts, perhaps?"

"No, never."

"And yet, it is a most interesting sight."

"One that ought to be suppressed," interrupted Château-Renaud.

"Not until the galleys are suppressed, too," said Gratillet, laughing. "But for that there is plenty of time."

"You do not believe in Progress, then?" asked Beauchamp, with a certain sarcasm in his tone.

Gratillet became suddenly grave.

"The Press is a mighty instrument, sir, and whenever it chooses, prisons and chains will disappear."

"How do you mean?"

"Merely, that if each day the horrible details of the hideous ceremonies attendant on the departure of the convicts were carefully published, and men and women reading them blush for shame, and when the children of Magistrates say to their parents, 'Why

dear father, are these poor creatures so tormented? then you may be sure that the end of these things is near."

"You are right," said Château-Renaud.

"Go on, Monsieur Gratillet," interposed Beauchamp, who began to feel a singular interest in the man.

"Suppose you give me to-morrow morning a column or a half column in the *Impartial*, and let me tell what took place at five o'clock in the courtyard of the Bicêtre, which is the most terrible place you ever saw. The poor creatures are driven like beasts out into the courtyard; their hands are tied behind their backs, and tied hard, let me tell you."

"You exaggerate, I am sure!"

"Not at all!" answered Gratillet, impetuously. "In the courtyard they are examined by a physician, for it is necessary to know if they can bear this long journey."

"That is certainly humane."

"I tell you I have seen poor, shivering creatures who could hardly stand, passed on by the physician as well and able-bodied." Gratillet rose as he spoke, as if he could argue more forcibly standing than sitting "Benedetto is a scoundrel, we are all ready to admit, but this morning when I saw him stripped of his clothing, and standing in the keen, wintry air, I really pitied him, but—"

"Ah! there is a but, then?"

"I mean to say that my pity quickly changed to fear. When the cold struck his naked shoulders and made him cower, a strange light flashed from his eyes

I never saw so cruel an expression in a human face. I instantly divined that every ferocious instinct lying dormant in his nature had quickened into life. He watched them carry off his clothes, not to wear them or to sell them as you may imagine, but to cut them into shreds."

"And why?" asked Château-Renaud.

"Lest anything should be concealed between the outside and the lining. But to return to Benedetto. When he saw one of the guards begin to cut the fine cloth of a coat like the one he wore at the trial, the poor fellow uttered a cry of rage, almost of pain—it was as if the knife had entered his heart. All the time this was going on there was a rattling of chains, and the blacksmith made a most infernal noise."

"And Benedetto?"

"Stood with fixed eyes and compressed lips, almost as if waiting for something. The chain is made after this fashion: The prisoners are made to stand side by side, and are attached, two by two, to a chain six feet long. To this chain is riveted a triangle of iron, which in its turn is riveted to the general chain which connects all the convicts. Each of the convicts in turn, with a triangle on his neck, is placed on his knees, and the blacksmith with a heavy iron hammer fastens the rivets that fasten the triangle. If the convict should make the slightest movement, this hammer would crush his skull!"

"Horrible!" said Beauchamp, with a shiver.

"When Benedetto's turn came, I watched him. I forgot to say, that when this part of the business is

done, the gates are opened and the parents and friends of the convicts are admitted. Benedetto was the last. His head was still on the block, when the great gates swung open a little too soon, and instinctively Benedetto turned to look. The hammer came down, but whether for good or evil, the man was saved—not even wounded—while sparks flew from the pavement where the hammer struck."

"Upon my word, Benedetto bears a charmed life!' said Beauchamp.

"The blacksmith swore and raged, and the jailers assisted him. I was watching Benedetto, and suddenly I saw his eyes flash with joy, and I turned instantly to the door. Among the crowd of strange-looking persons, was one stranger than all the rest. He was showing his permit to the jailer."

"If you intend to put all this into your article of to-morrow, it will sound like a romance."

"I am to write it, then!" cried Gratillet, flushing with joy.

"Yes, subject to certain conditions. We will talk of it."

"Oh! Monsieur Beauchamp, we two together might revolutionize the Press."

"Go on with your story."

"The man at whom Benedetto had looked was humpbacked and short. He might have served as a sign at the Jardin des Plantes. On his shoulders, or rather on his hump, was perched a monkey. By his side, walking on his hind legs, was a queer-looking dog. On one arm hung a cage full of birds, and on

the other was a rat—a mere rat; but such an one! as big as a rabbit, with a pointed nose, pointed tail and pointed eyes, so to speak—suggesting one of Hoffman's bizarre creations. And this rat ran all over the man, up and down his arms and legs, but all the time returning to his original post."

"A cultivated rat!"

"An academician! The man and his animals were so droll, the dog was so winning, and the rat was so delightful, that the man was gladly welcomed. He himself advanced slowly, looking around with the eyes of a ferret. To my great surprise he did not go immediately to Benedetto, but to another convict just behind him."

"Did you know that one?"

"Yes, I saw him, too, in court; a former priest, who had been arrested for conduct that I am ashamed to allude to in your presence. His name is the Abbé Sanselme."

"I remember the name," said Beauchamp.

"He, too, was a clever fellow, but not so clever that he escaped a sentence for life. Our man wandered about until he reached Sanselme and Benedetto, who was watching him eagerly. Between the former priest and Benedetto there was certainly some understanding, for they exchanged a few hurried words as the dog danced and the monkey jumped. The convicts laughed heartily and more than one tore himself from the arms of a weeping mother or wife to watch the creatures. Finally the strange party reached Sanselme, and all at once, as if the animal knew and recognized the priest,

the rat leaped from the shoulder of the humpback to that of Sanselme, and began to run over the convict as he did over his master. 'Oh!' said the priest, 'what a beautiful animal! Give it to me.' 'I give nothing I sell.' 'I have no money.' 'You have a ring,' was the reply. I could have sworn a minute before that Sanselme wore no ring. The humpback had made a little gesture and the priest had a ring on his finger. 'If the guards permit I will give you the ring for your rat.' I had been told that prisoners are permitted to have pets of this kind. Louis XIV. himself authorized Pelisson's spider. The chief of the chain was consulted and gave the required permission, asking, at the same time, what the rat did. 'Oh! many things; he jumps through a hoop.' 'Let us see that,' he said. The creature was put on the ground; a circle was formed around it. All these convicts laughed as heartily as if they did not wear about their necks a weight of twenty pounds. The humpback and Sanselme seized this opportunity to talk together. Evidently the humpback was giving Sanselme some instructions. Then he whistled shrilly and the rat ran up Sanselme's side and hid himself in the convict's breast. Benedetto asked some question, to which he received an answer in the affirmative. 'And what is the name of your rat?" asked the guard. 'Rodebois,' said the humpback; 'Monsieur Rodebois.' 'Bravo!' cried the convicts; 'long live Monsieur Rodebois!' The clock struck seven; all the preparations were completed. Visitors were dismissed, even the man with the dog and the monkey. I followed him out, and as the gate

closed upon us I said, 'Good morning, Monsieur Magloire.' He started so violently that the monkey was nearly dislodged from his seat on the hump. The man turned and gave me such a look. If he does as much to his poor little animals, he will never need a whip for them! I had been entirely right in my conjecture. Sanselme had sent through Benedetto and the lady, a note to this man, bidding him come to the prison that morning."

"Upon my word, Monsieur Gratillet, you would make a first-class detective."

"No, Monsieur Beauchamp, I simply like to follow a trail like this one. I have a certain amount of curiosity, like the rest of the world."

"And from what you saw, you draw the conclusion—

"That before long I had best write a romance called The Two Convicts and a Rat.'"

Beauchamp rang the bell. The boy appeared—the one who had received Gratillet so ungraciously.

"Chopin," said the editor, "from this moment, Monsieur Gratillet is on the staff of our paper." And writing out a check, he said, "Show him the way to the cashier's desk."

Gratillet took the paper, and flourishing it in the air, cried:

"Now for a revolution in journalism!"

CHAPTER VII.

NO. II.

ONCE riveted to the chain, and with the doors of Bicêtre closed behind him, the convict is little more than a slave, and is treated ten times worse than the negro that cowers under the lash of the planter. Terror and hatred become then the only sentiments in the lives of these miserable beings.

This horrible procession crossed France slowly, a curious crowd following them from time to time, among which were often inhuman creatures who hissed the convicts, whose rage was increased by their inability to resent the insult, other than by curses loud and deep. These scenes took place forty years ago to-day. Social hypocrisy has thrown a vail over these great sores, once so cynically displayed. There is still the same suffering, but we are spared its exhibition. Is this Progress?

At Châlons the convicts were crowded upon a boat, which took them down the Saône to Lyons. No incident marked the voyage, but as the prisoners were about leaving the boat, Sanselme contrived to approach Benedetto.

"Magloire is a brave man," he said, in a low voice.

Benedetto, oppressed by thoughts which he did not dare to confess to himself, looked at him with a wild stare

"What is that you say?"

"I mean that the little saw works well."

"But you told me that he gave you no instrument!"

Sanselme laughed.

"I know what I am about, be sure of that! But hush! you can't be too careful here. And remember, Benedetto, it is never worth while to despair!"

The guard ordered the convicts back into the ranks. Benedetto shrugged his shoulders. He had greatly changed. His face was very thin, his eyes sunken and hollow, his skin discolored and yellow. His sinister beauty had vanished, vailed by sullen despair. He mechanically obeyed the orders he received, and sought only oblivion. At night his sleep was haunted by frightful nightmares—nightmares of gold and murder. His temples throbbed madly, and he wondered if he were not becoming insane. He continually heard his mother's voice, talking of possessing millions, and of giving them away. The 24th of February she had promised to come, but what of that? What good would it do? When he had asked this last interview, he had believed that escape was possible; and in that case, the money would not be surrendered until the 25th. But now he knew that Sanselme had only been mocking him.

Yes, as the journalist had noticed, he had watched the gates up to the last moment, with the hope that a liberator would arrive. He did not know just what he expected or hoped. And who had come? A half-witted mountebank, who carried beasts and birds about to fairs—a travelling showman! And Sanselme had

been happy in the purchase of a villainous rat. What folly!

As prone to fall into discouragement as to be carried away by hope, Benedetto was now utterly despairing. He felt the most bitter hatred of those who had condemned him, and even of her who had saved his life, but who in his opinion ought to have done more and gained for him liberty and life.

At Larasçon the convicts were granted two days for repose, but on the 28th of January the gang entered Toulon.

Benedetto looked like a madman; his eyes were bloodshot and his lids inflated by want of sleep.

The Commissaire of the prison came to meet the new arrivals, accompanied by the city authorities.

When Benedetto's name was called, there was no reply.

"Why do you not answer?" asked the guard, raising his club.

Benedetto started as from a dream, and stammered some unintelligible words. At that moment he was thinking how he should kill himself.

The collar around his neck was now removed, and a ring fastened to his ankle. The convicts were then taken down to the shore and told to bathe. Would not the former Prince Cavalcanti find here an opportunity for the suicide of which he dreamed? No, Benedetto was afraid of death. He swam vigorously, and was astonished to find how strong he was. Every incident of his present life filled with shame this man

who had for months lived in the lap of luxury—but to live, was something after all!

He put on the yellow-sleeved jacket, the yellow pantaloons and the green cap. The most horrible thing of all, however, was the constant companionship to which he was forced, the companionship that made one convict the slave of the other who is riveted to the same chain.

Benedetto was placed with Sanselme. This was a mere chance, the two men being condemned to the same punishment, and at night they slept in one of the vessels which served as prisons when the one on shore was full to overflowing. These vessels were those which had formerly belonged to the navy, and had been condemned as unseaworthy. The one that received Benedetto and Sanselme was known as No. II, and was anchored a short distance from the shore.

At night, looking on them from the shore, nothing is more dreary than these black masses which assume all sorts of fantastic shapes and proportions. But if one goes further and penetrates these vessels after the convicts have returned from their work and lie stretched on the deck—but fastened all to the long iron bar known as the *Ramas*—when by the light of the lanterns fixed to the mast, these hideous faces are seen, all bearing the stains of vice, and when one remembers that these are men who have once filled a place in the world, who have thought, who have acted, who have lived, one feels that Dante never conceived a more ghastly vision.

Benedetto rarely spoke; he went to his work bend-

ing under the heavy timbers he bore on his shoulders. His eyes were generally half-closed and his memory busy with the brilliant episode of his recent life in Paris. He said to himself that all was over, and then he would hear Sanselme's sarcastic laugh close at his side. The gayety of this man was simply exasperating and odious.

Sanselme was of medium height, but quite stout. His round face was florid, and at a distance he looked as if not more than twenty-five, but in reality he was forty. His outbursts of noisy laughter denoted the most profound cynicism. He was thoroughly bad. His superiors fearing scandal, had protected him for a long time, but the day came when they could do so no longer, and he was tried and condemned to ten years' imprisonment. He escaped and concealed himself in Paris for several years, but finally attracted the attention of the police by new acts of debauchery, and was then arrested and sentenced for life.

Such was the man whom Benedetto had as companion; an epicurean, who thought of liberty only as the beginning of new orgies. He was invariably cheerful, replying to insults and violence with a jest which frequently disarmed the guard and made him laugh. He inspired Benedetto with an invincible repulsion—this son of Villefort, cruel and murderous, as he was, was filled with disgust by this man, who, however, seemed to pay little attention to him after the first few days when they were together. Then he tried to make Benedetto talk, but the former Prince Cavalcanti replied with threats of murder.

Sanselme laughed, but relapsed into silence.

Benedetto had still another cause for anger, and this was the rat, Monsieur Rodebois, as he was called.

Certainly Monsieur Rodebois was remarkably good company. He was delicately clean, and spent most of his time at his toilette. In the evening, before the chains were fastened to the *ramas*, Monsieur Rodebois gave an entertainment in an unoccupied room, by the light of a lantern obligingly placed on the floor by the guard, who had accepted the rat without question, being won by the creature's marvellous intelligence, who soon became a great favorite with everybody.

Most convicts seem when in confinement to have something of childhood in them.

"Gentlemen," said Sanselme, addressing the guard as well as his fellow-prisoners, "I have the honor to present to you Monsieur Rodebois, who is by no means one of those wretched rats who have no respect for the rights of property, and introduce themselves surreptitiously into the homes of honest people. No, Rodebois disdains such iniquities. He will never suffer the penalty of Article 381 of the Penal Code. Rodebois, have the goodness to tell these most honorable spectators that you respect the king, the law and the bench, and also the prison guards."

The convicts laughed loudly, as Monsieur Rodebois, standing on his hind legs in the midst of the luminous circle shed by the lantern, executed a series of gyrations which might pass for bows, then folding his little paws on his breast like a monk or a prince, he agitated his whiskers as if muttering a paternoster.

"Good! Very good, Monsieur Rodebois!" cried Sanselme. "You are a clever fellow, and you have the Penal Code at the tip of your paws; now please tell these kind people, who honor you with their approval, what happens to the accused who claim the benefit of Article 12 of the Penal Code?"

The convicts laughed louder. Every one of them knew this Article 12, which was thus worded:

"All those condemned to death will be beheaded."

The rat understood what was expected of him. He instantly assumed an air of compunction. Still standing on his hind legs, he crossed his front paws on his breast as a sign of repentance, then walked slowly to his master. When he reached him he laid his head on the chain, and Sanselme lightly struck the creature' neck with his finger.

Rodebois uttered a groan, and fell on the ground, lying as if dead. This the convicts regarded as intensely droll.

"Encore! Rodebois, encore!" cried the enthusiastic audience.

But this was not all. Rodebois jumped over a stick with a sharp cry each time, that reminded one of the Houp la! of the legendary clown.

Benedetto, lying as far away as his chain would permit, was the only one who was not interested in this creature, who, in fact, disgusted and almost frightened him. When the guard, wearied of this amusement, gave the signal for it to end, Sanselme would snatch up the little animal and place it in his breast, where it probably spent the night.

During the day, when the crew were at their work, Monsieur Bertrand was on board the vessel, but he was never seen. He took shelter there in the hold, among his disgraced brothers, but in the evening he appeared docile and intelligent, ready to give his little entertainment.

Benedetto, so intense was his loathing for this creature, would gladly have killed him, but he knew well that the officers would avenge their favorite.

"Why don't you ask to be released from the double chain?" said Benedetto, one day, to his companion.

Sanselme looked him in the face, and said:

"Why should I leave you? I like you well enough You don't worry me. Do you dislike me?"

"Yes, I do."

"I can't tell why. I have found out that you don't care to talk, and I rarely speak to you. What is the matter?"

"Never mind," answered the ex-Prince Cavalcanti, "only some time I shall certainly kill you."

"What a senseless antipathy! If I only knew the reason—"

"I know it, and that is enough. But let me tell you, if you can contrive to do so—get away from me. You had better!"

"Upon my word, you are not the most amiable of men."

Suddenly Sanselme changed his tone, and going nearer Benedetto said:

"Shall I tell you why you hate me? You hate me because you consider me a liar; because I told you

once that we could escape, and because since we came here I have said nothing more about it."

Benedetto started. These words were an accurate representation of his thoughts, and he stammered a faint protest.

"Look here, friend Benedetto—you see I call you friend, although you are ready enough to call me enemy—I thought you had more character, but I have studied you well. You have certain brutal instincts of crime; you go straight to your ends without the smallest evidence of skill or ingenuity; a man is in your way, you kill him; an adventurer takes you as his tool, you obey him blindly, without asking where he leads you."

It seemed as if Sanselme had the gift of divination. Yes, it was precisely thus that Benedetto had become the instrument of Monte-Cristo; it was thus that he had killed Caderousse.

He listened attentively.

"As for myself, I laugh and joke, but I know what I am about all the same. Be easy in your mind. I did not come here only to amuse the guards, I assure you!"

This conversation took place in the noon hour of rest. The two convicts were sitting by the side of a shed, a cold February rain was falling fast.

Benedetto suddenly exclaimed:

"You are mocking me, as you did the day you gave me that letter for Magloire."

"Which you faithfully forwarded to him."

"But what good did it do?"

"Ah! you are curious."

"Do you dare to pretend that this man can save us, and that it is possible for us to make our escape?"

"Suppose I said that I dared affirm this?"

"I should simply tell you you lied!"

Sanselme was not disposed to take offence, so he said with a smile:

"I am afraid that I shall never be able to make anything of you! Nevertheless, I assure you that we shall make our escape, and sooner than you think."

You are making your arrangements now, I suppose," sneered Benedetto.

"No; but some one is at work for me."

"Who may that be? One of the guards? the Governor of the prison, I suppose?"

"No, only one of our fellow prisoners."

He spoke in so serious a tone that Benedetto asked himself if the man were in earnest.

"One of our fellow prisoners," he repeated, in surprise. "Do I know him?"

"Certainly. You see him every day, but you do not like him. I have noticed that he has never done you any harm, and I am quite ready to swear has never said one word against you."

Benedetto wondered and questioned all in vain; Sanselme answered with his usual laugh.

"The truth is," he said, "you have been so sulky since we came here that I have been tempted to leave you in the lurch. I am not quite sure, too, that you would not betray me."

Benedetto started.

"Betray you! Ah!" he continued, "can you not understand I am suffering torments worse than death? I would give my right hand to be free by a certain date."

"Might I ask what that date is?"

"I want to be out of this place on the evening of the 24th."

"And what then?"

"You have your plans and I have mine. If I am free on the evening of the 24th, I can--

"Well?"

Benedetto did not speak for a moment. Then he said abruptly:

"Who knows that you may not betray me!"

"Listen to me, Benedetto," said the other, "our hour of repose will be over in five minutes, and we shall be obliged to go to our work. We have had these few moments to ourselves without the smallest indiscretion on our part, therefore you must let me speak without interruption. What I am about to tell you is absolutely true. If you wish—if you choose, you can be free at the hour you name on the 24th."

Benedetto uttered a cry.

"Hush! You would like to escape to-night, but that is impossible; but after the 15th of February—'

"The 24th is the day—neither before nor after."

"Very good, the 24th then, but I make certain conditions."

"I accept them, whatever they may be."

"I don't know about that. As for myself, I only wish to begin my Bohemian life again. After a few

months of mad enjoyment I shall be caught, but one can always escape from these prisons. You will possess yourself of gold, and you will create a new existence. You have been a Prince—Prince Cavalcanti. I have learned your history, and you will be again a Prince - Prince something else—it does not matter what. Thanks to your money, you will go through life prosperously, while I shall be always poor, but assist me and you shall go free."

"I do not understand you; I have no money."

"But you expect it. Divide with me and you are free."

Benedetto felt that this man read him thoroughly.

"What are you dreaming about? You talk in your sleep."

"What have I said?"

"Two things, over and over again: 'February 24th, and 'millions.' The two things seem intimately connected in your mind. You wish to be free on the 24th of February; it is on that day that you can, by some great *coup*, possess yourself of millions. Divide this money, and I will assure you your escape."

"Time is up!" shouted the guard.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Sanselme.

Benedetto struggled between his longing to be free and an inexpressible distrust of this man, who terrified him more than ever. And yet if he spoke the truth! On the other hand, he could not make up his mind to part with any portion of the money he did not yet possess, and which he did not yet know how to acquire He felt his brain whirl.

elme rose, and half dragged Benedetto by his in back to the field where they were at work.

"Think well about this," said the former priest, in a low voice, "for when you have once promised, I swear that you will be made to keep your oath."

"How much do you want?"

"A quarter of a million. You see that I am reasonable."

"And you swear that on the 24th February—"

"We will escape together."

"But the companion?"

"Oh! he will give us no trouble. Do you promise? The quarter?"

"I agree, but I must know who it is that aids us."

"You shall know to-night. Rodebois, where are you?" cried Sanselme, whistling in a peculiar way.

Presently, a little noise was heard, and Monsieur Rodebois appeared.

"Ah! Sir, you are welcome," said Sanselme, picking up the animal, and passing his hand over the mouth of the creature, as if he wished to clean his whiskers. "To-night, with the permission of the company, we will play that little piece called 'Escape from Prison.'"

"None of that nonsense," roared the guard, "or I confiscate the rat!"

"Do you understand?" said Sanselme, in Benedetto's ear.

CHAPTER VIII.

STRANGE THINGS.

IT is hardly necessary to tell our readers that forty years ago Paris was not much like what it is to-day. A map of that period presents only a tangle of narrow streets, and yet Paris was none the less the Queen of all the capitals of Europe. These reflections, which we will not pursue, are inspired by the necessity we are under to take our radius from Provence to the Quartier Laborde, which to-day has been obliterated by the Boulevard Haussman and the Boulevard Male sherbes. It covered a large space from the Rue du Rochu to the Parc Morceaux. There was an ill smelling market, and a labyrinth of dirty lanes which would have discouraged Ariadne herself. But in the times of which we write, people were not easily discouraged. To go from the Louvre to the Tuileries was a task of difficulty; but the Royal Gardens amply repaid one for the trouble, for they were ten times finer than to-day.

Batignolles was hardly in existence. Courcelles was a village where the houses were surrounded by immense grounds and high walls. It was here that physicians established their private asylums for the insane, wishing to give their unfortunate patients the benefit of pure air and quiet. The asylum of Dr.

D'Avrigny was looked upon as the best of these establishments. Standing upon the top of a hill, it suggested some enchanted Palace, where the Sleeping Beauty waited for Prince Charming.

Dr. D'Avrigny consecrated his life and his talents to the unfortunate, who were formerly tortured by the ignorant as if they had been criminals.

One evening the Doctor sat alone in his study, perusing attentively the reports that had been sent in to him on the events of the day. When he reached the one that bore the name of Monsieur de Villefort, he studied it more minutely than the others; then he hastily made a few notes. A knock was heard on his door, and a servant brought in a card.

The Doctor uttered an exclamation of surprise as he glanced at it.

"Monsieur Morrel! Show him in! Show him in!"

The Doctor had not seen Maximilian Morrel since that day that Valentine, Villefort's daughter, had fallen dead—from poison, as it was believed—and Maximilian had forced his way into the room where the dead girl lay. Dr. D'Avrigny remembered the passionate grief of the young man, and how he had said to Villefort:

"I tell you that there is a murderer in this house!"

What had since become of the desolate youth who had been robbed of the woman who was to become his wife? The Doctor had never since heard of him. Perhaps he had already forgotten the terrible tragedy which had swept away the Villefort family, leaving only one spectre of despair and shame.

Maximilian appeared, dressed in black.

The Doctor looked at him, and instantly saw that he had been guilty of a grave error in doubting the loyalty of this man, and cordially extended his hands in welcome.

"Doctor," said Morrel, "you were not only the physician but the friend of the Villefort family."

"Yes; and I have felt most keenly the terrible misfortunes that have fallen upon them!"

"And you have never abandoned the unhappy man whose reason succumbed under the weight of his many trials."

"I did only my duty, sir. Monsieur Villefort is a great criminal, but he is expiating all the evil he has done. When he became insane, the law could do no more, and then my task began. He was entrusted to me, but alas! I can do little to ameliorate these last hours of his life."

"Then it is true that he is in danger?"

"How did you hear of it?"

"I will tell you later, but first, I beg of you, say if there is no hope of saving him."

The Doctor turned to his desk and took up the report he had held in his hand when his visitor appeared.

"Read these notes," he said, "from the nurse who never leaves Monsieur Villefort."

Maximilian complied, and read the notes aloud:

"A great change is visible in the patient. His reason seems to be returning. His eyes have lost their haggard expression, the muscles of his face have relaxed, and his complexion is more natural in its color. At

three o'clock to-day he asked me if I could send for the Procureur, whom he desired especially to see. My answer that I would send at once seemed to soothe him for a few moments. Then he said, nervously: 'I wish the Procureur would come, to-morrow will be too late, I fear!' 'Do you feel weaker, then?' I asked. 'One's sufferings always increase as we approach our deliverance!' he answered, and then seated himself at his desk and wrote with a firm hand."

"But may not this nurse be mistaken?" asked Morrel.

"I have just been up to see him, and am sorry to say that I consider his death very near. The lucidity of his mind proves this, but for him death is deliverance!"

The Doctor passed his hand over his brow.

A moment of silence followed, then Morrel, leaning forward, said gently:

"Doctor, I have a grave question to ask, and I implore entire frankness on your part."

"Do you doubt me, dear Monsieur Morrel? I am not one of those who trifle with the truth!"

"I know that—but pray listen to me. Do you think if Monsieur de Villefort should experience a great shock, that the emotion would necessarily shorten his life?"

"Of what nature is this emotion? If it be painful, why inflict it?"

"But I hope it will give him pleasure rather than pain!"

"I don't understand you. Do you not think that half confidences are worse than none? Nor do I

deserve them. One by one all the old friends, and the very servants, who knew Monsieur de Villefort have passed away—his guilty wife and his beloved Valentine. How, then, can I believe that there is any joy in store for him?"

"You do not believe in miracles, then?"

"No—so called miracles are merely the result of natural causes."

"You are right—but let me go on. You loved Mademoiselle de Villefort, did you not?"

"She was an angel, and when you suddenly appeared, the day that she took that fatal poison, it was impossible to accuse you, for you loved her as she deserved to be loved!"

"Ah! Doctor, how kind are these words!" cried Morrel, pressing the physician's hand. "But why is it, when you so fully estimate the purity and goodness of that sweet nature, that you have never asked if she be really dead?"

The young man spoke with evident excitement. The physician looked at him with vague uneasiness. Had sorrow shaken the equilibrium of this great soul? Maximilian understood the look.

"No, I am not mad," he said, with a smile, and continued:

"You say that you held in your arms the inanimate form of Valentine, and then that you, with others, labored for hours to restore her to life. I saw you myself at Père la Chaise. Contrary to custom, you determined, and I thanked you from the bottom of my heart, to see that angel laid in her resting-place. Yes,

I saw you, kneeling by the side of the grave. You started when the earth fell on the coffin, as if its inmate had been your nearest and dearest. You did not see me through the mist of your tears. You staggered away, saying, half aloud, 'It is all over!' Again, Monsieur D'Avrigny, I repeat, that you may imagine the most impossible of facts, and then you will understand why I did not blow my brains out that fatal day."

"Am I dreaming?" said the Doctor, in a trembling voice. "Your voice is firm, your hand is cool, and yet your words are those of a madman."

"You begin to understand that Valentine—"

"That Valentine de Villefort—'

"Is living!"

The old man staggered to a chair. Tears rolled down his noble face.

"Living!" he murmured. "No, it is impossible."

"She is living, I repeat. It was but a lethargy, which you believed to be death. While the criminal hand of her stepmother poured out the poison, another hand, that of a mysterious being, saved the child from the snare laid for her and tore her from her executioners, leaving them to believe that their work was accomplished."

The Doctor did not speak for a moment. The shock had been a violent one, and the old man could not at once regain his self-possession. At last he said:

"Pray, give me all the facts. You are a man of honor, and would not play upon the credulity of an old man."

Then Maximilian, with simple directness, repeated to D'Avrigny what he had himself heard from Valentine's lips. How the Count of Monte-Cristo had entered her chamber at midnight and taken away the poison prepared by Madame de Villefort. Knowing, moreover, that this cruel woman would stop at nothing to secure to her child the inheritance of old Noirtier, he had no hesitation in playing this comedy of death.

"Monte-Cristo!" interrupted the Doctor. "Who is this man who seems to be the incarnation of divine justice?"

"That question, sir, I cannot answer. Yet this man is greatness itself, and he is and has been the angel of chastisement and benevolence. But I must respect his secret; the little that I know I must not breathe."

"I respect your scruples, and I shall not insist. But you can surely tell me how Valentine was torn from the tomb?"

"I am ignorant of the details. Valentine only knows that she was plunged into a sleep which deprived her utterly of consciousness; the first thing after this that she remembers is a flare of torches and being borne a long distance in the arms of several men. She probably fainted, as she can tell nothing more. Then the next day the Count of Monte-Cristo said to me, 'Maximilian, you have no right to die; your duty is to live for her whom you love and who loves you!'"

"Then Valentine is living! Where is she—this poor child who has no longer a name?"

"Since that fatal day when madness and death drove her from her home, Mademoiselle de Villefort has been

living near Marseilles, where she takes care of Monsieur Noirtier."

"I accidentally heard that the poor paralytic had left Paris, and was a little astonished at not having been better informed."

"Pray excuse us, Doctor. The strange position in which we stand compelled us to extreme caution, and to seem to forget our best friends, among whom we include you. But I must now explain my motive in being here to-day. I have come for your counsel and aid."

"Which are entirely at your disposal, my dear Morrel."

"Five days ago this note was received by Valentine," and Morrel handed to the Doctor the following note:

"MADEMOISELLE:—You are pitiful and tender. A man is dying at Dr. D'Avrigny's; this man is your father. Your own heart will dictate the course you should pursue. M. C."

"These initials are those of Monte-Cristo," said the physician.

"And the note came from him. We have not doubted that for a moment."

"But you know where to find the Count?"

"Not at all."

"How could he know that the end was so near? I did not know it myself on the date of that note."

"The Count has superhuman wisdom and instincts," answered Morrel.

"But what has Valentine decided to do?" asked the Doctor.

"How can you, who know her so well, ask such a question?" replied Morrel, in a reproachful tone.

"Valentine is here, then?"

"Certainly. We started at once, and found relays of horses all the way along, which proved that Monte Cristo divined resolution and promptitude on the part of Valentine; and now I repeat my question: Monsieur de Villefort believes his daughter to be dead, and were he to see her, what would be the result in his present condition?"

At this moment the door opened and a young man, with an open, frank countenance, entered hastily. He stopped short when he saw Maximilian, and bowed. Dr. D'Avrigny said to Morrel:

"I present my son, a physician, like his father, and ask your friendship and confidence for him. Frederic, Monsieur Morrel is one of the noblest men in the world."

The two young men shook hands cordially.

"Why did you come in so hastily?" asked the Doctor.

"I have just come from one of your patients—De Villefort," answered Frederic.

"Is he worse?"

"He is delirious and demands to see the Procureur At first I supposed the request to be simply that of an insane man; but I have now made up my mind that he knows what he is saying, and that, feeling his end to be near, he has some revelations to make."

D'Avrigny and Maximilian exchanged a look.

"I will see the Procureur at once," answered D'Avrigny; "I have rendered such services to him that I feel sure he will come at my request. But first, Monsieur Morrel, I must answer your question. Monsieur de Villefort can, I think, endure the shock caused by the appearance of the lady you mention. Besides, in my opinion we have no right to prevent the meeting and probable reconciliation of these two persons."

"Then you authorize me—"

"To bring Valentine here. Where is she?"

"At my sister's."

"I cannot yet fix the hour for the interview. She must hold herself in readiness to obey my summons."

"Which she is momentarily expecting."

"Tell her to come here to-night. I have a room for her with your sister, and then she can be at the side of the dying man in a moment. Now, Frederic, come with me—we will see De Villefort together."

The two young men again shook hands, and while Morrel went for Valentine, the two physicians went to the apartment of Monsieur de Villefort.

CHAPTER IX.

A DYING CONFESSION.

CROWERING in a deep arm-chair, with his face buried in his hands, Monsieur de Villefort seemed not to have heard the noise of the opening door.

The nurse had met the physicians in the ante-room, and said a few words in a low voice. To this man of experience, the death of Monsieur de Villefort seemed very near. It was a disorganization of the whole system, an entire breaking up, but as the fever left the patient, his brain became clearer and his eyes steadier.

The Doctor, signing to his son to remain quiet, went to the side of Monsieur de Villefort, and gently placed his hand on his shoulder.

De Villefort started and lifted his head. His eyes instantly told the truth—that his intellect was clear again.

"Are you suffering?" asked the physician.

De Villefort pressed his hands upon his breast with a great effort, and said, in a faint voice:

"Yes—intensely!"

"Have courage. You know that you will receive every attention here."

"Would you prevent me from dying, then?"

answered De Villefort, in a tone of indescribable bitterness. "Fortunately, all your science is powerless to prolong my agony!" He added, in a lower voice: "Oh! Death, come quickly!"

After a long silence, the patient turned his head toward Dr. D'Avrigny:

"Has the Procureur arrived?" he asked.

"You insist on seeing him, then?"

"Certainly I do. Has no one executed my orders?" He laughed bitterly. "Excuse me, I forget. I spoke of orders—I am nothing here. I should have said: Has no one listened to my request?"

"I have come, Monsieur de Villefort," said the Doctor, in some solemnity, "to make a few observations to you before taking further steps."

"Observations! Make them at once, then. You know very well that there is little time to waste."

"You are aware, of course, that the Procureur will come only for the gravest reasons?"

De Villefort raised himself in his chair, and with great earnestness and dignity, replied:

"When a man who has filled one of the highest positions in the judicial government of his country summons his successor to his side, the latter should neither hesitate nor reflect. I have done this man, however, so many services that he has a right to be ungrateful, still I do not think he will refuse the last request of a dying man!"

He hesitated a minute, as if laboring to collect his thoughts.

"Doctor," he continued, finally, "I swear to you

that it is of the gravest importance that I should see the Procureur. Give me a pen and paper, that I may write my request myself."

Monsieur de Villefort completed his task with great difficulty, and when he had sealed his letter, said:

"Go, sir, and do not delay—Death never waits!"

Monsieur D'Avrigny left the sick room with his son, intending to send the letter with a few words from himself. Suddenly, he beheld himself face to face with Valentine, who knelt at once before him. She was dressed in the deepest mourning, and it was with great emotion that the Doctor laid his hand on her head and murmured:

"Dear child! Heaven's blessings be yours. You are the only innocent one in this most guilty family. Thank Heaven that you have decided to forget your wrongs, and think only of the sufferings of the man whose name you bear!"

"And how is he? Is Monsieur de Villefort—is my father—in danger?"

"I shall conceal nothing from you. At sunrise to-morrow he will have left this world!"

"I must see him at once! Why this delay?"

"I understand your impatience, my child, but I must tell you that I have this moment, at your father's urgent demand, sent my son for the Procureur du Roi."

"Good Heavens!" cried Valentine, "what can this mean?"

"I know not, but suspect that it arises from eagerness to make amends for some injustice."

"And do you think," asked Maximilian, "that the Procureur will obey this summons?"

"Yes, for in addition to the appeal by Monsieur de Villefort, I have added a few words of explanation and entreaty."

Turning to Valentine, the Doctor said:

"My child, you have had a most fatiguing journey. Will you not retire to the room which is in readiness for you, with Madame d'Herbault, and rest?"

"Gladly, if you will promise to summon me at the earliest moment when I can see my father."

"Most assuredly."

The Doctor and Morrel were now left alone.

"How strange it is," said the physician, "that a man like Monsieur de Villefort can have a daughter like Valentine!"

"But her mother, you know, was very beautiful. I never had the pleasure of her acquaintance, but she was ambitious, and in certain respects quite worshiped the man she married. As to the old Marquise —Valentine's grandmother—I can assure you that she never erred on the side of tenderness."

"She loved her grandchild, nevertheless."

"I admit that, and yet have you forgotten that, due to her aristocratic prejudices, she did her best to marry Valentine against her will?"

"I admit that—and she wrote one note that I shall never forget. In this note she said that tears or supplications would be of no avail—nothing could alter the intentions of Valentine's family. But at

this time the Marquise was suffering from the first symptoms of the attack from which she died."

"Call it what you will—but her death was occasioned by poison. I repeat, that the appearance of Valentine, so good, pure and unselfish in such a family, has routed all my theories!"

A carriage rolled into the court-yard.

"Ah! that must be Frederic," said the Doctor, rising and going to the window. "Yes," he added, "and not alone. The Procureur is with him!"

In a moment more, Frederic opened the door of his father's room and stepped aside to allow the magistrate to enter. The two young men retreated to the window, while the Procureur and the physician conferred in a low voice.

"I thank you, sir," said D'Avrigny. "You may be sure that only the gravest reasons could have given me the boldness to remind you of a slight service"—

—"Which I have not forgotten. But Monsieur de Villefort's note would have been enough in itself. You know, my dear Doctor, that magistrates are like diplomates—they possess many secrets which belong to Justice, as the correspondence of a former ambassador belongs to his government. Monsieur de Villefort has undoubtedly in his lifetime been the depository of some terrible secrets."

"Which you are ready to hear?"

"Certainly—but tell me, do you think, as his physician, that I am justified in believing what he says? His insanity—"

"I assure you," interrupted D'Avrigny "that his

mind is now perfectly clear. Such a change often takes place at the approach of death."

"Very good; you will be present at the interview?"

"If you think best."

"We will ask Monsieur de Villefort. If his reason has returned, he will know better than we, if his confession should be heard."

Frederic and Maximilian had gone down to the garden. The evening was clear, but the air was sharp, and they walked up and down, waiting until they were summoned.

The new Procureur offered a strange contrast to his predecessor. Monsieur de Villefort was cold, reserved and stately. Monsieur de Flamboin was gay, but a little heavy and provincial. When he entered the sick room, the invalid, with a strength which one would have supposed impossible, lifted himself from his chair and went a step or two to meet him.

A looker-on would have supposed, if in ignorance of the situation, that it was simply a host receiving a welcome guest.

Monsieur de Flamboin bowed respectfully, while the physician gently reseated his patient.

Our readers may be astonished that the Procureur of the King should show so much deference to a man who in a court of justice had been found guilty of the murder of his child born in adultery. But the last appearance of the magistrate in the court where he had reigned supreme, had left a profound impression of pity in the minds of all then present.

"You have sent for me," said the Procureur, "to

make certain important communications. I hastened to obey your summons, and I am here. But first let me ask if it is to your former pupil, which I am proud to call myself, or to the magistrate that you address yourself?"

"To the magistrate," answered De Villefort, clearly and slowly.

"Do you wish to be alone with me?"

"No," answered De Villefort, "I beg that my kind physician will remain, unless you yourself object."

"I have no wish to oppose you unless your disclosures should be in any way relative to the government."

De Villefort smiled faintly.

"I am near my death," he said, "and I have sent for you merely to confess a crime of which I have hitherto been unsuspected."

"You!" said Monsieur de Flamboin, whose placidity was somewhat shaken by these words.

He did not say, however, that had he not supposed that the revelation was some great political secret, he would not have disturbed himself to obey the summons he had received.

He seated himself with an air of constraint. This rôle of confessor was not in the least agreeable to him, but it was now too late to escape.

Monsieur de Villefort passed his hand over his brow.

"I find some difficulty in expressing myself," he said. "Yesterday I was mad, to-morrow I shall be dead—"

He hesitated a moment, and then continued.

"There are certain names which are a stain upon

those who bear them. Mine is one of these, thanks to Madame de Villefort and to myself—"

The doctor here made a little gesture.

"Let me go on. The name of Villefort is infamous throughout the civilized world for, Monsieur de Flambeau, the man who for twenty-five years was looked upon as a worthy representative of human justice, in 1814 condemned to imprisonment for life—I, myself, a young man whose only crime was that he had it in his power to compromise the magistrate's career."

"To imprisonment for life!" cried the Procureur, "but that was a most dastardly crime!"

"You are right. And that dastardly crime I committed coldly and deliberately. I thought this man was dead, for his ghost persistently haunted my slumbers. He was living, and he was avenged. From this crime came my chastisement.

"The first woman who bore my name, my accursed name, was guilty—but later I will tell you of what.

"The second woman whom I married was a poisoner. She killed Madame de Saint-Meran and her husband; she killed an old servant named Barois—she killed—Valentine—"

The worn features of the sick man moved convulsively as he uttered this name.

"She killed my son. The rest you know, and also that she was a victim to the fatality that attaches itself to the name of De Villefort.

"I also killed my son who was born of adulterous love. I had him buried alive, and then later I sat in judgment on the errors [illegible] nkind—"

He stopped abruptly.

"I can't remember," he said piteously. "This man—what became of him? Ah! I remember, he was executed."

"Not so," said the Procureur, "the jury was merciful—"

"He was sentenced to the galleys. Oh! what a mistake. Poor fellow! Poor fellow!"

And the former magistrate saw a vision suddenly appear before him of a man wearing a green cap—bent by his heavy toil, cringing under the lash of the guards. And this man was his own flesh and blood! He was the son of the only woman who had loved him.

He shivered as he continued, "And the only one who has any claim to the name of De Villefort."

The Procureur drew out his watch.

The invalid saw the movement, and said, with sarcastic emphasis:

"Excuse me if I abuse your kindness. I forgot that magistrates have little time to waste on sentimentalities."

The Procureur made a protesting gesture.

"I repeat, sir, that upon the tomb of my two guilty wives will be inscribed the name of De Villefort, as well as upon my own. But this name shall not stain an innocent tomb—it must be effaced at once."

"I do not understand you," exclaimed the doctor, greatly puzzled. "Is it of your son that you speak?"

"Of my son? By no means; he was worthy of me and of his mother—was a true De Villefort, hypocriti-

cal and cruel. Let him keep the name to which he is entitled."

"But whom then do you mean?"

"I speak of her who was thrown by some strange fatality into the family of high-born criminals—of her whose funeral cross bears to-day the name of De Villefort."

"Valentine—your daughter!"

"Yes, Valentine, but not my daughter; she was no De Villefort."

And as if he had heard what the doctor had said to Maximilian, he continued:

"Ah! what blindness! How is it that no one of you has seen that those honest eyes and pure brow could not belong to a Villefort? When I looked at her I was afraid of her. No, I repeat, she was not a Villefort."

The doctor asked himself if his patient was not suffering a relapse. But no, his eyes were clear and steady, and his voice properly modulated.

Monsieur de Flamboin was greatly disturbed.

"She, of whom you speak, is dead. What can you do for her now?" he asked.

"I can take from her memory the terrible stigma of the name of De Villefort. The letters on that marble slab must be effaced, I tell you! They must be burning, like those branded upon the shoulder by the hot iron of an executioner. Listen to me: Long ago—thirty-four years, an eternity—I was young, but my heart was old, corrupt and ambitious. I was young in years, I say, but I doubt if in heart I was ever

young. I made it my first task to repress all enthusiasm in myself, knowing very well that I could not reach the summit of my ambition if I erred in that direction. I married Mademoiselle de Saint-Meran, as you know. You remember her beauty and her wonderful charm, but her heart and nature were as cold as my own. She did not sacrifice herself to a penniless young man; she married a Magistrate with a career before him, and took to him also a handsome fortune. This was what some of us call love. A fortnight after the return of Louis XVIII, in 1815, Mademoiselle de Saint-Meran became Madame de Villefort. Her fate was sealed. Had she married another man her evil instincts might have lain dormant, but united to a De Villefort they were quickly developed. After several months she told me I was soon to be a father. Ah! how well I remember our conversations at this time. I have heard women, and men too, talk of the first smiles of their children, of their kisses; but this was quite another thing. In the marriage contract there was an especial stipulation: on the birth of our first child we were to receive three hundred thousand francs. Think of it! Think what a sum like that would be to a young lawyer in the provinces. It meant, moreover, a position in Paris. To go to Paris! The bare idea made my very fingers tingle. It meant, perhaps, being received at court. Renée de Villefort counted the days, nay, the very hours. Of the child there was little thought—the layette was ordered by the mother from a large furnishing store. There were no tender hopes, no loving

thoughts, interwoven with the ribbons and laces. Those who saw the anxiety with which I watched over my wife, said to themselves, 'what a husband he makes.' While I arranged Renée's pillows, I whispered, 'Be of good courage. Think of it! Procureur du Roi, at Paris,' and she smiled.

"Was she more selfish, and more cruel, than other women? No; she was only what we educate our children to be. We teach them to truckle to those who have favors and honors to bestow, poor ignorant creatures that we are!"

The Procureur was not at his ease. He felt that he ought to lift up his voice in protest. D'Avrigny, on the contrary, was ready to approve loudly, but both were silent, for the voice of De Villefort had a strange hollow sound, that indicated the near approach of death.

"You are tired!" said the Procureur, at last.

"No, no; I am not tired, it is only that I see all the frivolities of life too clearly now, and the sight nauseates me. But let me go on. My wife expected her confinement early in May, 1816. Here I must go back a year and recount events which no one knows. You know that after the return of the Emperor from Elba my position was greatly endangered. I had shown the most exaggerated devotion to the Bourbon cause, because it was for them, I said to myself, that I had committed my first crime, the imprisonment of a poor young sailor in the marine service. When Napoleon reached the Tuileries there was no more talk, be it understood, of a marriage between Mademoiselle de

Saint-Meran and myself. I thought only of the present, and of doing my best to cause the past to be forgotten by those who had it in their power to demand a terrible account from me. Thanks to the connivance of certain of my superiors I was removed from the position I held, and sent to Toulouse, where I was comparatively unknown. You have not forgotton that the first weeks of the Imperial Restoration, which was to last but one hundred days, were characterized by the most frantic efforts on the part of the Royalists to hold their power. There was an attempt made to establish a Royal Government at Toulouse, which should connect the Duchess d'Angoulême, who was at Bordeaux, and the Duc, who at Marseilles was organizing an active campaign. Marshal Perignon was placed at the head of the Royalist volunteers. English and Spanish gold sustained the party, which had met with certain military successes, when suddenly it was known that Bordeaux had capitulated and opened its gates to General Clausel. General Delaborde, an ardent partisan of the Imperial régime, at the head of a battalion of the Third Infantry, marched upon the capitol, and took Marshal Perignon and Monsieur de Vitrolles prisoners. This was the 4th of April. A part of the population of Toulouse welcomed, with transport, the expulsion of the Royalists and the unfurling of the tricolored flag. I was extremely careful not to interfere in any of these events, and took a house just without the town, on the shore of the Garonne. On the evening of the 4th, I had shut myself up on the pretence of work of importance, but in

reality because I wished to remain in absolute ignorance of all that was going on, and thus avoid all blame from either party. Suddenly—it was then about ten o'clock—I heard a great noise, which seemed to come from the direction of the Porte Saint Piérre; then this noise became words. 'Help! help!' was what I heard first. It was plain that a crowd was coming toward my house. Obeying the prudential plan I had marked out for myself, I quickly extinguished my lamp, fearing that if it were seen, my help would be asked, and rising, I went to the window and looked out. I saw not more than sixty yards from me a man running at full speed. He was pursued by a crowd, uttering angry cries. I fancied I heard the words, 'down with the Englishman!' The man seemed so agile, and was so swift, that not for a moment did I doubt his escape. Suddenly I saw him fall; he had stumbled over some obstacle. His pursuers at once clutched him; there were wild yells, and then a splash. The man had been thrown into the Garonne.

"Then the assassins, having gratified their vengeance, seemed seized with a sudden panic, and fled in all directions. I did not move for some minutes. All was over. Another crime had been committed, which would go unpunished. I went back to my desk and tried to work, but found it impossible. I started, for on my window I heard a light tap, with a low voice called for assistance. My housekeeper had long since retired, and I was entirely alone. I took a pistol from my drawer, and went out at the rear of the house, and

so to the front in order to reconnoitre. But softly as I walked, my step was heard; the voice again rose:

"'Help! my lord! help!'

"I remembered that I had heard in the hoarse cries of the crowd, the word 'Englishman,' and I felt sure that the man I had supposed dead, stood before me. He was alone; his assailants had vanished, and I had nothing to fear. I went to him, and saw that I was entirely right. He was shivering with cold.

"'Take my arm,' I said, 'and I will help you.'

"I assisted him into my library, and he sank into a chair in front of the fire. Then, all at once, he became deadly pale, and fainted. Inhuman as I really am by nature, there was still a ray of pity in the bottom of my heart. I hastened to administer a cordial, and while he was slowly recovering I examined him. He was a man of about thirty, with well cut features. His hair was greatly disordered, but it was easy to see that it was curly like a woman's. I believed the man to be English, and yet his beauty, which was wonderful, was in some respects of a southern type. At last he opened his eyes. I had closed my curtains, and was standing near him. His eyes were fine, but something in them again made me feel that he was not a European.

"'You have saved me!' he said, in his foreign accent. 'You have not saved an ungrateful person.'

"'Who are you?' I asked. 'And what can I do for you?'

"'They tried to murder me do you not know that?'

"I was ashamed to acknowledge that I had witnessed the scene without lifting my finger to assist him, and I repeated his words in a tone of surprise. His penetrating eyes were fixed on me, as if he wished to read my very thoughts. But I was unmoved, and then as if satisfied with his examination, he continued:

"'Those madmen mistook me for an English spy, in the interests of the Royalists. They hunted me down and threw me into the river. I had my senses and dived as soon as I rose to the surface, and thus escaped them. You have shown me hospitality, and I thank you.'

"'You are English?' I asked.

"He half rose, and a strange contemptuous light came into his eyes, as he answered impatiently:

"'English! I?'

"'But to what nation do you belong?'

"He did not speak for a moment, and then, looking at me earnestly, he said:

"'You are young. You can not be a traitor. Why should you fear me?'

"'I need not. Napoleon is again on the throne, and every good Frenchman should be the enemy of all Englishmen. You can speak or preserve silence as seemeth to you good. But if I can do you a service never hesitate to command me.' I was sincere in my protestations, for I had never been so much interested in any one as in this singular person, who had invaded my home in this manner. Then, too, I was devoured by my curiosity.

"'I am cold,' he said. 'Can you not give me some other clothes?'

"I apologized for my negligence, and taking him to my dressing-room, I placed my wardrobe at his disposal.

"When he reappeared, ten minutes later, I started. An absolute transformation had taken place—his hair had regained its lustre, he was wrapped in a cloak, and wore around his throat a white silk handkerchief carelessly tied. Simple as was his costume, there was so much dignity in his mien, that I involuntarily exclaimed, 'Who are you? Pray, who are you?'

"'I am he who will save Napoleon, who will save France, and crush the infernal power of the English.

"At any other time I would have asked myself if my new companion was not a madman, but—that night such strange events had taken place that I was almost in a fever. 'Go on!' I cried, with enthusiam, 'and if I can aid you let me do so.' He stood with his arms folded on his breast. In spite of my vehement protestations, I evidently inspired him with instinctive distrust.

"'Listen,' he said, at last, 'and answer me frankly. Where is the Emperor?'

"'In Paris.'

"'You are sure?'

"'As sure as one can be of anything in these troubled days.'

"'Then I must start at once.'

"'For Paris?'

"'Yes.'

"'But the roads are not safe, and although you say

you are the friend of France, your accent would lead you to be taken for an Englishman.'

"'But there is no war at present between the two nations!'

"'You know as well as I that the populace pay little attention to that! But you can establish your nationality, which I do not yet know, and take out such papers as will make it perfectly safe for you to travel where you will without the smallest anxiety.'

"He seemed to be reflecting, and then asked who could procure such papers for him. Departing from my usual prudence, I told him that I was myself a magistrate.

"He uttered an exclamation of surprise and joy.

"'A magistrate!' he repeated.

"'What in England you would call advocate to the crown,' I answered.

"'In England,' he replied, with a lurid light in his eyes, 'there are no magistrates, no judges, there are only executioners, but I am now in France. I love France. My ancestors were French.'

"'I ask once more, of what nation are you?'

"He extended his arms toward the East. 'Let your imagination waft you over those countries and broad seas,' he replied, solemnly. 'Farther yet—farther! Over there is a country so large that the whole of Europe would make only one of its provinces; forests so impenetrable that the sunlight never touches the soil; monuments so enormous, so colossal, that the lapse of centuries has left them unimpaired; treasures so considerable, of jewels and gold, that they are of

little more importance than the grains of sand with which your children play on the sea-shore.'

"'India!' I exclaimed.

"He bowed his head.

"'Yes,' he said, 'it is the land which you people here call India. We call it the Kingdom of the Sun.'

"'You are a Hindoo, then?'

"'Yes, a Hindoo, and one of the party that demands the independence of that sacred soil, and has sworn death to traitors, assassins and the English!'

"'But did you not say that your ancestors were French? Have you forgotten the glories of Labournaie and Lally?'

"'No, Lally was a great patriot, and sacrificed by the French monarchy. These men were not easily forgotten, however. My father was killed on the 27th of October, 1803, in the battle of Laswarri. He had married a lady at the court of Scindia, and left a daughter and a son; I am that son.'

"'You are a Frenchman by birth then?'

"'No,' he said, 'the blood of my mother runs in my veins. I was born in her land.'

"All I heard affected me like a fairy tale. I could now understand the semi-exotic effect produced by this man. It seemed to me, however, that he had more to tell.

"'Would you not be willing to entrust me with your title and your name?' I asked, timidly.

"'My title!' he answered, with a start, 'I have none! My name! For two months I have had no right to it. I was a slave! Five years since, in 1810,

the great Scindia, the true sovereign of Hindostan, re-commenced the contest with the English. After a noble struggle we were conquered, and I fell with my sister into the hands of the English.'

"'Your sister!'

"'She was then a child, not quite fifteen, and I was twenty-five. We were torn from our beloved land and carried to England to grace the triumph of our conquerors in the city of London. There, in spite of the tears of my little sister, Naya, in spite of my frantic rage, we were separated, and for five years I have watched and waited to make my escape. Two months since I fled. I will not now stop to tell you of the manner of my escape; you would think it a wild fable. Concealed in the hold of a Spanish ship, I left England and was landed in Spain. I made my way across mountains until I reached the soil of France, and arrived here only this morning. To-night I escaped death. To-morrow I shall resume my journey to seek the residence of the implacable adversary of the English. I will say to him, Sir, do you desire to humiliate England and bring her to your feet a suppliant? Then listen to me. I have come to ask your aid. With the support of France all Hindostan, from the deserts of Marousthan to the Vindga Mountains, will rise to repel the English. The death warrant of the power of Great Britain will be signed by the alliance of France and Hindostan!'

"The Hindoo, as he stood before me trembling with excitement, was an admirable object. At this time I

knew little of the matter to which he alluded, but his enthusiasm carried me off my feet.

"'It would be a magnificent enterprise!' I cried. 'Hasten to Paris.'

"'And you will secure a passport for me?'

"I suddenly remembered the risk I was running, and hesitated.

"I will, at all events, do my best to procure one for you—but your name?

"'My name is Daola,' he answered, with simple dignity.

"'But your sister, where is she?'

"'Still in England. One of my companions in captivity, to whom she was affianced before we fell into the power of the English, remained to watch over her. As soon as she can make her escape, they will come to France to join me.'

"'But how can they know where you are?' I asked this question involuntarily, and did not think of the consequences that followed.

"Daola, after a moment's silence, said, quietly, 'Chance has brought us together. You have offered your assistance. To-morrow, thanks to you, I shall start for Paris; permit me to indicate to them your house as a place of meeting.'

"And this man, to whom I must give his full name and title, Rajah Süvadji Daola, extended his hand in the most cordial manner.

"Again did I act from calculation. 'If this man speak the truth,' I said to myself, 'I run no risk in procuring a passport for him and permitting him to

indicate my house as a rendezvous for his sister and her lover. If Napoleon fall, no one will know what I have done, and my career will be unimpeded. If, on the contrary, his plan, which seems so mad, should receive Napoleon's approval, then my fortune is made. I had not one kindly impulse in my heart—I thought only of myself when I laid my hand in his and said: 'Rely on me, and consider my house as your own.'

"'You have a noble heart,' he answered, gravely.

"As he spoke he threw back the mantle he wore and unfastened a belt concealed under his clothing. It was woven of heavy silk, scarlet in hue. Sewed into it I saw innumerable precious stones. He took out an ornament of singular form—it was a bracelet, which seemed to have been cut in two by some tremendous blow.

"'Look well at this,' he said, 'and admit no one into your house from me, who cannot show you the other half of this bracelet. I cannot leave it with you, for I have no right to part with it.'

"He made me examine the Hindoo characters graven upon the metal. I proposed to copy them on paper, but he asked for wax and easily took their impression. Then with a pencil he wrote under this wax the characters which I should find on the other half of the bracelet. He did his best to induce me to accept a magnificent emerald, whose value must have been enormous. But this I refused from motives of prudence.

"'When can I go?' he asked finally.

"'Your passport will be ready at eight o'clock in the

morning, but your name is a stumbling block, and will at once awaken curiosity.'

"'My father's name was Jean d'Arvas.'

"I took out the passport under that name, and the Prince Daola left for Paris early in the morning."

The hour was late, and De Villefort's voice was very feeble. D'Avrigny, fearing that he could not finish his story, begged him to rest.

"No! No!" cried De Villefort. "I must not wait. I hear death calling me!"

The doctor insisted, however, on giving his patient a cordial, after which De Villefort continued:

"Three months elapsed. I had heard nothing from Daola nor from those of whom he had spoken. Waterloo had ruined the Emperor. France was again governed by its legitimate kings. I had become the husband of Mademoiselle Saint-Meran. My wife, as I before said, was about to become a mother; the day arrived; we were then living at Toulouse. I had greatly improved and enlarged my property there; my wife liked the place, and the flower garden and vines were the wonder of the neighborhood. My wife's mother had come from Marseilles and was established in a small house at the end of the garden. On the 6th Madame de Villefort gave birth to a daughter; all went well, but the child was small and delicate. Madame de Meran remained with her daughter all day, but when night came I said that I would watch with my wife until early in the morning, when the wet-nurse would arrive. I sat reading. My wife was asleep in the

same room where a year before I had received my strange visitor.

"About one o'clock it seemed to me that I heard my name spoken from the garden below. At first I thought I must have been asleep, for my fatigue was great. But hearing it again, I started up. It was a woman's voice, feeble and faint. Without awakening my wife, I stole down the stairs and out to the garden, where I saw leaning against the wall a tall white form. I hastened toward this figure, and by the moonlight beheld a woman of marvellous beauty, but of unearthly pallor. I was startled by the extraordinary resemblance she bore to the man who had visited me a year previously. Before I reached her she said, faintly:

"'You are Monsieur de Villefort?'

"'Yes, and you, I am sure, are Naya.'

"'I am the sister of the Rajah Süvadji Daola. I am the widow of the Rajah Dattiah! I am a mother, and I am dying!' And throwing back her shawl, she showed me a tiny creature that seemed only a few hours old.

"I took the child, for the pale mother seemed unable to hold it longer, and when I removed it from her arms, she sank upon the ground. I hastened to raise her.

"'Let me be! she sighed, 'I am dying. My husband was killed just as we were about to leave England. With infinite difficulty I managed to reach France, and a few hours ago my child was born in that thicket by the roadside. Then, I gathered up my strength and dragged myself here. Take my child.

love her, and be kind to her. Her name is Naya, and here is the bracelet!'

"She feebly extended something to me, and then sank back unconscious—she was dead! Terror-stricken, I rushed back to my wife's room, carrying the child entrusted to me under such extraordinary circumstances. Madame de Villefort had not awakened. I went to Valentine's cradle, intending to place this child of a mysterious race by the side of my own infant, when all at once I received a strange impression which chilled me from head to foot. I leaned over Valentine. The infant did not breathe—she was dead! I snatched her from the cradle, laying the other child in her place, and felt her feet and hands, and listened to hear her breathe, but life had fled.

"Then, incredible as it may seem, I felt no grief for the loss of my child—I only remembered the three hundred thousand francs that my father-in-law was to have given me. I remembered only my ambitious dreams, and without deliberating for a moment, I rushed down the stairs, and placed my Valentine within the arms of the dead body lying stiff in my garden.

"Now, you know why I say that the name of De Villefort must be removed from the grave!"

Monsieur de Villefort sank back in his chair, gasping for breath. Utter silence reigned in the room.

"But your wife," asked the Doctor; "did you tell her nothing?"

"She had placed a medallion on the neck of her child, and not finding it, she asked me where it was

I had not then learned to lie—I stammered something, and finally told her the truth."

"Poor woman!"

"Your pity is unnecessary. Why did she become my accomplice?—why did she accept this unknown child? Because her father arrived the next day with my appointment as Procureur du Roi for Marseilles; because he had a distinct promise of a position for me in Paris. Ah! I tell you again, my family is accursed!"

"What became of the dead mother and child?"

"They were found the next morning before my door. No information could be obtained in regard to the woman. She had about her person some papers in Hindoostan dialect. I took them on the pretext that I required them to aid me in my search. I have them still. They have never been translated. I will give them to you with the bracelet."

He leaned over a casket on the table in front of him, and took from it a package of papers of a singular hue. The broken bracelet and the impression of one half he also took from the casket.

"And this child, who perhaps would have had a happy destiny, was tortured and poisoned by Heloise de Villefort, the poisoner!"

"Have you heard no more of him whom you call the Rajah Süvadji Daola?"

"Ah! my confession is not yet complete," said De Villefort, with a shudder. "About three years after this—yes, it was in 1818—a letter came to me from India, and from the Rajah. He told me that he

had been unable to induce Napoleon to look with favor on his plans, and that, following him to Waterloo, he was there himself taken prisoner by the English, and remained a whole year in their hands. Finally, he escaped, and was again heading revolutions against British power in India. He begged me to send him some news of his sister Naya. I answered that I had heard nothing of her.'

"And since then?"

"Not a word. I have written a full account of the facts I have just related to you. And now, sir, I request that search shall be made for the Rajah Daola, and that he may be informed of my crime. Swear that you will do this!"

Dr. D'Avrigny rose from his chair.

"And if she who was called Valentine de Villefort were living, what then?" he asked, solemnly.

CHAPTER X.

MIRACLES.

THIS fantastic narrative, told by a mad man about to die, in the middle of the night, had certainly affected the nerves of these men, and when Dr. D'Avrigny uttered the sentence we have repeated, the Procureur shuddered uncomfortably. De Villefort himself was not greatly moved. His physician felt that this would be the case when he gave his consent to the meeting proposed by Maximilian.

"Living!" cried the Procureur.

De Villefort simply gazed intently at the physician, and repeated the words quietly.

"Living! Would to God that such a miracle were possible!"

"But you witnessed the funeral, Doctor," said the Procureur.

"Yes—I went to the cemetery."

"And yet, you imply that she is now living?"

Monsieur D'Avrigny was watching De Villefort, with a half fear of some paroxysm. But Villefort spoke quietly enough:

"Mademoiselle de Villefort is dead, but Naya, the daughter of the Rajah Dattiah—why may not she be living?"

"But this is utter madness!" answered the Procureur, "since they are one and the same."

"Nevertheless," said the physician, "my patient speaks the truth!"

"Impossible!" muttered the Procureur, angrily. "If what you say is true, Mademoiselle de Villefort must have been buried alive!"

"Not an unusual occurrence!" said the physician.

"That may be, but we always hear of such incidents. The public press takes hold of them at once."

"You are right, sir; but here there were unusual circumstances—the death and burial were not the result of a physician's blunders, but came from a preconceived plan."

Dr. D'Avrigny turned to his patient:

"Answer my questions frankly," he said. "First, how did Valentine die?"

"From poison, administered by her step-mother."

"What motive had Madame de Villefort for desiring the death of Valentine?"

"She wished that my fortune, and that of my first wife, should come to her son."

"Horrible!" murmured the Procureur.

"Let me go on," continued Monsieur D'Avrigny. "Collect your thoughts, Monsieur de Villefort. Do you remember having seen, in the few days preceding the frightful tragedy of which we are speaking, a man who seems to have taken upon himself the right of redressing all wrongs—punishing the wicked and rewarding the well-doers—a man who seems endowed with supernatural powers?"

De Villefort opened his eyes wider and wider. They were filled with the wildest terror. Suddenly a hoarse cry escaped his lips:

"Yes—yes, I remember him!"

"Shall I tell you the name of this man?"

"No!" answered De Villefort, spasmodically, "no, for you do not know it. You would call him, I presume, the Count of Monte-Cristo!"

D'Avrigny bowed assent.

"The Count of Monte-Cristo!" repeated the Procureur, disdainfully. "Was not that the name of the adventurer—"

He did not finish his sentence, the sick man with marvellous strength caught his arm.

"Silence!" he cried. "You insult the noblest of men! Was it he whom you call the Count of Monte-Cristo," he asked, turning to his physician, "who saved my daughter—or rather saved her whom I called my daughter?"

"Yes—it was he."

"Then the miracle is accomplished! I accept it as such."

"But," interrupted the Procureur, "if Mademoiselle de Villefort be living, why do we not see her here? I have met her in former days at your own house, Monsieur de Villefort. I should know her again, I am sure, and if any deception has been practised on our good doctor, I shall expose it at once."

"Monsieur de Villefort," asked Dr. D'Avrigny you say you are willing to accept this miracle?"

"Yes, and I repeat it."

"If you should see Valentine enter this door—"

"My dear old friend, if it be possible this my sole alleviation is in store for me, I beg you hasten. In mercy hasten, for Death is near—I feel his coming."

The physician went to the window and called Maximilian.

The name was heard by the dying man.

"Maximilian," he repeated, with a start, "do you mean Maximilian Morrel?"

"Yes, I mean the son of the man you knew in Marseilles."

"Ah! the expiation is complete." And then, in a never mine, he added: "Edmond Dantes."

A gentle knock was heard at the door. The physician went to his patient and took his hand.

"Control yourself," he said, gently.

The door opened, revealing Valentine dressed in deep black.

She hesitated a moment, then seeing De Villefort's deadly pallor, she ran to him and kneeling at his side, exclaimed:

"Father! Father!"

Then something occurred which gave the Procureur a new idea of his predecessor. Monsieur de Villefort bowed his head in his hands and sobbed aloud. The doctor leaned over his patient and tried to soothe him.

"Father!" said Valentine, "do you not know me? It is I!"

"What think you now!" said the physician to the Procureur, "do you still doubt?"

Valentine had moved away De Villefort's hands

from his face, and fixing her gentle eyes on his, she said:

"Why do you not speak to me, father? Why do you not speak to me? Am I not still your Valentine?"

Villefort seemed to be awakening from a dream. Color came into his cheek.

"Maximilian," he said, "have the goodness to come here."

Morrel obeyed.

"You know me," continued Villefort, "and you know the harm I did your father."

"Yes, Monsieur Villefort, but I have learned to forget."

"But have you learned to forgive?"

Maximilian knelt on one knee at the feet of the sick man, and said:

"I ask Valentine's father to bless us."

"No, no—I have no right to bless anyone. I cannot talk much more. Else, both of you, and now listen to me."

Lifting himself from his chair with the aid of Valentine, he said solemnly:

"I call upon all here present to hear my dying words. She who now is known as Valentine de Villefort has no right to my name. She is not my daughter. Give this declaration a legal form with no delay."

Monsieur de Flamboin assumed white Valentine threw her arms around the neck of the [illegible], crying out:

"What is it you say? I am not your daughter?"

"No, my dear child," answered De Villefort, disen-

gaging her arms gently, "these gentlemen will tell you the truth; you are not the daughter of Villefort and Renée de Saint-Meran. Give me that casket, Doctor."

D'Avrigny gave him the casket.

De Villefort thrust his hand within, and took out some papers.

"These," he said to Valentine, "belong to you, and are of the greatest importance. One only has been translated, and that is the marriage certificate of the Rajah Dattiah and Naya, sister of the Rajah Süvadji Daola. It states that the marriage was celebrated by a Brahmin, who was taken prisoner by the English at Epping, near London, July, 1818. Naya Daola was your mother, Dattiah your father."

Valentine, stunned by surprise, looked from the good Doctor to the Procureur, thinking that her father's mind was again affected. But the Procureur said:

"Monsieur de Villefort tells you the truth, my dear child."

"This is not all," continued De Villefort. "Here is the letter, written me near the end of the year 1818, by the Rajah Daola—"

"But my mother?" cried Valentine.

"She is dead. Your father, too, is dead. Both died many long years ago."

"Then it was you who took me into your home, and allowed me to look upon myself as your own child? How kind!" cried Valentine. "Let me at least call you father."

"Ah! anyone would know that you were not a Villefort," said the old man, half to himself. "No, I

have no right to the sweet name of father. I know, however, something of the joy of repentance. I have been a great criminal, Valentine. Forget me. If you, Morrel, ever see again the mysterious man who rescued Valentine, say to him, that cruelly as he has punished me, I die recognizing the justice of his chastisement. And you, Maximilian, will be to Valentine—to Naya—family and country. If accident brings you in contact with the Rajah, whom I deceived by telling him that I knew nothing of Naya, arrest the curse on his lips. Ah! forgive me, forgive me!"

And suddenly, as if all the springs in his organism had suddenly given way, De Villefort fell on his knees. It was a sad sight. He clasped his trembling hands like a child saying his nightly prayer.

"Ah!" he murmured, "all of you, whom I have sacrificed to my insatiable ambition, whom I have tortured and killed, forgive me. I dare not believe in annihilation; beyond the tomb an avenging God awaits me. Forgive me. My brain and heart are on fire. God have mercy on my soul!"

"We will pray for you," said the Doctor, gently.

There was a long silence. Valentine was weeping, and yet a faint hope had awakened in her heart. She said to herself, that somewhere in the world was a person who had known her mother.

The dying man's bowed form swayed unsteadily. The Doctor caught him.

"I must tear all hatred from my heart," he murmured, faintly. "There is one man whose name I can never utter without a shiver of rage—the name of the

man who had the audacity to reproach me with my crime, the only man in whose veins runs the De Villefort blood."

"You speak of your son?" asked the physician.

"Yes, of the son whom I wished to kill, and who also escaped death. Through me he was thrown into a life of shame. And now he is in the galleys, and I die—the true criminal—die free!"

He extended his emaciated arms.

"What convict," he cried, "deserves such heavy chains as I? Ah! I no longer hate him—I feel only pity. If the prayers of a dying man can have any effect, listen to mine. Have compassion on Benedetto—he has been made cruel and ferocious by cruel treatment. This man is a Villefort, he inherits their errors and their vices. Ah! I am afraid—afraid for those I leave. for you, Valentine, for you, Morrel. Mercy may soften Benedetto's cruel heart. Strict justice will only harden it."

"I promise you," said Monsieur Flamboin, "that if this man of whom you speak deserves pardon by repentance, that I will ask the clemency of the Sovereign."

"And I," said Valentine, "will go to him and take him these words of encouragement and hope."

"Thanks!" cried De Villefort; "daughter of a noble race, may Heaven bless you."

A hoarse groan followed these words. Then a name the name was Edmond Dantes, and in this last groan this man's life went out.

CHAPTER XI.

TOASTS.

ALTHOUGH fully anticipated, this death was a great shock to all who were present.

The Procureur was the first to recover. He was greatly puzzled what to do; there was Valentine, dead in law, living in fact. Such conduct was illegal, and absolutely without precedent.

"These papers amount to nothing—they are written in an unknown tongue," he said triumphantly.

But the doctor's son, Frederic, here spoke.

"I beg your pardon," he said.

Monsieur de Flamboin brought the full radiance of his spectacles to bear on the audacious youth who had ventured to interfere.

"What is that you say?" he asked, sternly.

"Father," said Frederic, "I will not speak until you bid me."

"Speak, my son!" said the old Doctor, gravely.

"I merely wish to say that I can read these papers."

"You can read them?" asked the Procureur.

"My son has made himself the master of these Oriental tongues," said Monsieur D'Avrigny, with pardonable pride.

"My father knows," says Frederic, "that I have

long had a wish to travel, and have particularly desired to go to India. For this reason I have familiarized myself with its language."

"And you can translate these papers?" asked the Procureur.

"With perfect ease."

"In that case there will not be the smallest difficulty in making all this clear, and placing the matter in the hands of the Keeper of the Seals."

Monsieur de Flamboin was now resigned to anything, the lateness of the hour included.

"You can bring me the translations to-morrow,' he said to Frederic, and then took his departure.

Valentine, weary as she was, insisted on keeping watch all night.

On the face of the dead man was now an expression of serene content, which Valentine saw as she knelt in prayer. Almost unaware of the fact, she was none the less glad in her heart that she was not of the Villefort race.

Toward morning, Julie Herbault entered the room.

"Sister," she said, "you have shed tears enough over the Past—think a little of the Future!"

"You are right!" answered Valentine, for we shall continue to call her by that name. "Is it not natural, though, to pause sometimes and look back?"

She stood looking down on De Villefort. "I think he loved me," she said, "as if I had been his own child. I remember her who called herself my mother, and other kind people who are dead and gone, and to them all I send a prayer and a benediction."

Blinded by her tears, she kissed De Villefort's hand.

Julie then drew Valentine into the salon, where the family were assembled. Dr. D'Avrigny came forward to meet her. With him were Antoinette and Madeleine, his niece and his daughter, the latter very beautiful, with eyes of inexpressible sweetness, but she was very frail and delicate. His niece, on the contrary, was gay and laughing, and the picture of health.

"You have not forgotten my dear daughter Madeleine?" said D'Avrigny, as he presented the young girl to Valentine.

Emanuel Herbault came in a few minutes later, and soon all were assembled around the patriarchal table of the old physician. How many strange histories were represented by the people there assembled!

First, there was Julie Morrel, saved from despair and death by him who was then called Sinbad the Sailor; Valentine, miraculously rescued from the tomb Emanuel, the former head clerk of the House at Marseilles; and Dr. D'Avrigny, who had seen so many of the guilty brought to punishment. The Doctor raised his glass.

"My children!" he said, "permit me to call you all my children—there is one name that I wish to speak, the name of a benefactor for whom we should all feel boundless devotion and respect."

"To the Count of Monte-Cristo!" said Maximilian

"To the Count of Monte-Cristo!" repeated every voice in the room.

At this moment, as if these words had been a signal, the door opened.

A cry of startled surprise escaped every one. Ali, the Count's body-servant, was on the threshold. Bowing low, he went to Monsieur D'Avrigny, and, without speaking, for our readers will remember that Ali was dumb, he handed him a large envelope. The physician with feverish haste broke the seal. A sheet of paper within had only these words upon it:

"Blessed be those who remember and are faithful! If danger threatens, do not forget that God may raise up a protector, even at the last hour. Wait and hope!"

All listened to the reading of this missive with rapt attention, and when they turned, Ali had vanished.

"Wait and hope!" repeated D'Avrigny, extending his hands, which were eagerly seized. It was as if they all wished to take an oath of devotion to each other, and to the good cause.

"My children," said D'Avrigny, "in a few days we are to separate. As soon as I have done all that remains to be done for Monsieur de Villefort, I shall go to Italy with Madeleine and my mother."

"Italy!" cried Maximilian. "We, too, are going there—Valentine, Monsieur Noirtier, and I."

"And you know, brother," said Julie, "that I shall never leave you!"

"I seem to be the only one, then," exclaimed Frederic, "to remain in Paris, but I shall not linger long."

"You still intend to go to the East?" asked Morrel. "In that case you will go to Marseilles, shall you not?"

"I shall sail from there."

"And we shall return by that route. Valentine has not forgotten her promise to Monsieur de Villefort. She intends to carry his messages to that unfortunate Benedetto."

Monsieur D'Avrigny's brow contracted.

"Benedetto!" he said. "I do not know why, but I can never hear that name without a shudder! A secret instinct warns me that it is from that quarter the danger will come of which the Count of Monte-Cristo warns us."

"I have promised," said Valentine, gently. "And who knows what may be the result!"

"God guard you, my child! But once more believe in the voice of age and experience. Be on your guard against this Benedetto!"

CHAPTER XII.

RODEBOIS.

FEBRUARY was passing away. Benedetto and Sanselme were still on the pontoon gang.

Monsieur Rodebois continued each evening to amuse the prisoners, who never seemed to tire of his antics.

In vain had Benedetto endeavored to obtain from his companion any explanations in regard to the rôle the creature was to play in their escape. Sanselme refused to surrender his secret. "What does it matter," he asked, gruffly, "if you are free at the hour you have chosen?"

"But why should you be so reticent? Are you afraid that I shall betray you?"

"My son," answered Sanselme, "you are still young, or you would know that a secret is never kept by two persons as well as by one."

"But the time is passing, and I see no preparations on your part to keep your promise."

"That is, you would like to see me hard at work on our plans in broad daylight, and in the presence of the guards?"

"Not at all; but our chains are still riveted to our feet."

"They will fall, however, when Rodebois chooses!"

Benedetto felt a spasm of rage when he heard this preposterous reply. His companion's coolness angered him, but what could he do? He could take no steps for his own escape, as he and Sanselme were chained together, and he could hardly conceive a thought unknown to his accomplice.

Finally, on the morning of the 23d of February, that is, the day before that which he had fixed for his departure from the prison, his rage could no longer be controlled.

"Listen to me," he said to Sanselme through his close shut teeth. "I know now that you are trifling with me. My patience is quite gone, and I insist on knowing the truth, and shall act accordingly."

"What will you do?"

"If you have been encouraging groundless hopes in my mind I will certainly kill you. What do I risk? Only death—and I would as soon die as live here. I should feel at least one emotion of joy in having killed a traitor."

"Pshaw!" sneered Sanselme. "You are talking nonsense. Before you think of dying, which, believe me, you would not find so agreeable, it would be best to see if there be no chance of your living. Now there is something that you have not yet told me."

"And what is that? But remember what I say, that if you have deceived me—"

"Deceived you, indeed. Wait until I do, before you threaten so fiercely. Has the 24th of February gone yet? You talked of a fortune, and promised to share it with me, but I should really like to have some idea

where your little bird has built its nest; how you intend to catch it, and how we shall divide its pretty feathers."

"That is, you would like me to put myself entirely in your power, while you keep everything from me."

"My dear boy, permit me to remind you that this fortune, so far as you are concerned, is valueless without my aid. Tell me about it?"

Benedetto, in spite of his distrust, admitted the truth of his companion's words, but he also realized that if the talk about escape was a mere jest, that it was far from wise to surrender his secret. Then, too, if they succeeded in making their escape, he was by no means willing to share the money with his accomplice. The mere suggestion was like tearing out his heart. But to be free! To be rich! But is it rich to have only half a million, particularly when one might have the million intact? But supposing he were free, within twenty-four hours, was he sure that this million would be his? When he thought of this he shuddered, and saw a sea of blood before him.

"Well!" said Sanselme, "I should say it was you who were mocking me now."

"No!" cried Benedetto, suddenly coming to a decision. "The million exists, but how to touch it is still the question."

"Naturally," answered the other, sulkily, "but you have some claim on this money, I presume."

"Oh! certainly," Benedetto replied, "for it was stolen from me."

"You must have been a precious fool, then!"

"A woman—"

"The little lady of the note?"

"Yes."

"But why is it necessary that you should be free on the 24th? Why not on the 23d or the 25th?"

"Because on the 25th the sum would forever escape my grasp."

"Pray, explain yourself. It is hard work for me to tear these sentences from your unwilling lips. Confidence for confidence. When you have told me, I will explain the secret attractions of our friend Rodebois."

They were at this moment on the mole. The timber that the convicts were unloading was piled so high, and so far out in the water, that it was almost like a bridge.

"Look there!" said Sanselme.

Benedetto looked, but saw nothing, and said so.

"Ah! your eyes are very poor then! Or rather you don't use your common sense. Now what is it you wish to know?"

"How you intend that we shall escape?"

"And who is the person of whom I have spoken as our accomplice?"

"Rodebois, the rat."

"Very well; look for a rat then, and not for a guard or a convict."

"I see him!" cried Benedetto.

In fact, he perceived a tiny black object in the place to which Sanselme had pointed. It was running along the timber, darting in and out of crevices, and climb

ing about with a dexterity which many sailors might have envied.

Sanselme looked warily around.

"We are all quiet here. Wait!"

He placed two fingers over his mouth, and whistled in a peculiar way.

In another second Rodebois appeared, and jumped on his master's knees.

"Well done, my boy!" said Sanselme, caressing the creature. "Let us see if you have our treasure safe."

Looking all around once more to see that there were no intruders, he laid the rat on its back, and, blowing aside the hairs on its belly, drew out to Benedetto's great surprise, one of those slender files which convicts love so dearly.

"We were well searched," said Sanselme, "when we came here. I only wonder that our skins were not stripped over our ears to see if we had nothing hidden under them, but they did not find this tiny file. Rodebois was too smart for them!"

Benedetto laughed heartily.

Sanselme replaced the case among the thick hairs of the animal.

"Do you believe me, now?" he asked.

"I do, indeed: and Rodebois carries our workshop about with him!"

"Oh! he does much more than that, as you will discover ere long!"

Rodebois, now released, was off like an arrow.

Benedetto was amazed; his nature was utterly unimaginative, and the simplicity of this plan was

almost incredible. Sanselme became greatly elevated in his opinion, and from distrust he leaped to the most absolute confidence.

"This is my plan," he said. "A woman will come here on the 24th."

"You are sure?"

"Oh! she will not dare break her word," sneered Benedetto. "This woman is to pay over to certain parties, on certain conditions, the sum I mentioned."

"The million? Zounds! that is abominable!"

"She considers it a sacred obligation," and Benedetto laughed, as he continued; "and I must be free that night that I may follow and watch her, and—"

"Put the money in your own pockets—and in mine, you must not forget that."

"Of course not, but it is not necessary to say the same thing over and over again."

"But who is this woman?"

Benedetto turned away, impatiently

"A former mistress?"

"No. I swear you are wrong."

"Then she is a friend—a relative?"

"No."

"I see you are determined to tell nothing. Just as you please. Do you mean to use a knife?"

Benedetto drew back with a shudder.

"I don't suppose the lady will offer you the million on a silver tray, and urge you to take it. Suppose she fights for her money—what then?"

Benedetto turned ghastly pale, but he said, with white lips, in a sullen tone:

"One must do what one must, I suppose!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Sanselme. "I see the Captain down there with a lot of officers, and there is a lady, too!"

"Ah!" gasped Benedetto, starting up.

The guards now summoned the convicts to their work, and Benedetto and his companion as well as the others. The visitors and officers approached. Benedetto examined them all. He had pulled his cap over his eyes that the guard might not see how earnestly he was examining the face of each one of the strangers. Suddenly he started and involuntarily took a step forward.

"Zounds! fellow," exclaimed a guard, "what are you about?" And the heavy club came down on the convict's shoulders.

Benedetto stifled a cry of rage, for he had recognized the daughter of Villefort, of that man to whom he had sworn eternal hatred. Benedetto had never forgiven him, and in his dreams of wealth his plans of vengeance were always included.

With Valentine he recognized Maximilian Morrel, the friend of the Count of Monte-Cristo, whom he had met in the house at Auteuil.

He saw the Captain call one of the guard, and ask some questions, and then give him an order.

Benedetto saw this and his temples throbbed painfully. What was going on? When would these persons whom he hated take their departure? And why had they come?

The guard approached Benedetto's squad and said

something to the officer in charge, who, turning to Benedetto, called out:

"Come on—you are wanted!"

"I must come too," said Sanselme, laughing.

This little joke was much to the taste of the guard, and his roughness relaxed. Benedetto and Sanselme left the ranks.

"You are as white as a ghost," whispered Sanselme; "don't be a fool, now."

"You need not be troubled, I assure you."

"You say that in a devilish sort of way. Now look out; if you are guilty of any folly to-day, you lose your chances for to-morrow. But this is not the woman, then?"

"No, it is not she."

The two convicts were led toward the strangers. The Captain came forward.

"Which of you is called Benedetto?" he asked.

"I am the one," replied the ex-Prince Cavalcanti.

"I have agreed that these people shall see you that they shall speak to you, but I forbid you to utter one word!"

Benedetto inclined his head.

Valentine stood leaning on Maximilian's arm. To her tender nature this scene was inexpressibly trying. She became paler and paler.

"Courage!" whispered Morrel.

She lifted her head and her gentle eyes rested on the poor wretch who stood before her, with his cap in his hand. He had been forbidden to speak, but curses foamed to his lips.

"Monsieur de Villefort is dead!" said Valentine, gently.

Benedetto started. Dead! and he had not killed him!

"He is dead," continued Valentine, "and ere he died he forgave you. Nay, he entreated that some alleviation should be shown you."

A gleam of curiosity came into the eyes of Benedetto.

"The Captain tells me that to-day you will be relieved of the double chain, and more than that, he says that if your conduct justifies greater clemency, that you may hope for it."

The Captain here added his assurance to that of the lady.

"I promised Monsieur de Villefort," continued Valentine, "that I would bring you these words of encouragement, and I have kept my word. May God have pity on you!"

Valentine's voice failed. She had met Benedetto's eyes and they startled her. It was not of herself she thought as much as of Morrel, for he was included in the mute menace. She saw that the soul of the convict was eager for revenge, and she was afraid for the man she loved.

"I authorize you to speak, now," said the Captain to Benedetto. "Say anything you have to say."

"I am sorry that Monsieur de Villefort is dead," murmured Benedetto, in a dull voice. "I am dead, too, and I only ask forgetfulness."

The Captain made a sign, and the convicts were marched off.

"Poor creature!" said Valentine, resisting the impression she had received. Then, seizing Maximilian's arm nervously, she cried:

"Take me away! take me away! I shall die, if I stay here longer!"

Benedetto was returning to his squad in silence, but Sanselme said:

"Who is that girl?"

"What is it to you?"

"True; but she is very beautiful, all the same." And the convict shook his head sagaciously.

Toward evening the order was given to remove the double chain from Benedetto, and as there had never been any complaint against Sanselme, it followed that he too enjoyed the same privilege, "for the time being," the guard said, "for if another odd party turns up, I shall clap you with him—you may rely on that, old fellow."

"I don't believe it!" answered Sanselme, with a laugh, "you think too much of me and of Rodebois."

Benedetto passed a terrible night, although he was for the first time set free from the chain, and was far more master of himself and his movements. But frightful dreams haunted him All at once he was overwhelmed by despair. He lost faith in himself and in Sanselme. When dawn came, Benedetto had hardly strength to stand. And yet he was obliged to work and cower under the lash of the guard. He asked

himself if this day should pass without bringing his freedom with it, what would become of him?

At this very moment a post-chaise was flying along the highway that led toward the prison. In this carriage sat a woman closely vailed and dressed in black. Suddenly she started forward from the corner where she had been half asleep. The post-chaise had drawn up in front of one of those military posts established to protect travellers through the forests. The lady dropped the glass and drank in with eagerness the dry frosty air.

"Where are we?" she asked.

"At Beausset, or rather we shall be there in a half-hour," was the reply of the officer, who, passport in hand, approached the carriage to verify its descriptions. With his hand upon his cap, he asked if the lady had had any trouble.

"None whatever," she answered.

"You are going to Toulon?"

With a sigh, the lady said "Yes."

"And do you propose to go through the gorge alone?"

"No; at Beausset a gentleman will join me."

"Ah! I am glad to hear it, for that gorge is a bad place. Drive on, postillion, and make haste, for a storm is coming up."

The postillion seemed struck by these words, and after a glance at the sky, gathered up his reins and started off at full speed.

In less than a half-hour the lady descended at the only inn in Beausset.

"Where is the Rectory?" she asked of the host, who came to meet her.

"Two steps from here, Madame, on the other side of the church."

As she turned away he asked respectfully if she would be gone long.

"Ten minutes, only."

"Then I shall have time to arrange your breakfast, Madame—"

"No, I shall not stop here; but you can give the postillion what he wants."

"Be ready to start in fifteen minutes," said the lady to the postillion.

"Yes, Madame; I will breathe the horses, and take a bite myself."

"Send some one to go with me to the Rectory," said the lady.

"Certainly, Madame; Jacquot!" shouted the innkeeper, to a boy who was scrubbing one of the benches in front of the door, "go with Madame."

"To the Rectory?" asked Jacquot, as he started off.

"Yes, my friend. Why are you so astonished?"

"Because there is no one there."

"No one!"

"The Rector was called away by the Bishop, yesterday, and won't be back until to-morrow; but I forgot old Margot."

The lady looked annoyed; but as she had reached the Rectory door by this time, she knocked. The Rectory was a small house of two stories, surrounded by olive trees.

"They were fine trees once," said Jacquot, "but the frost has killed them."

And as the lady looked up at the windows above, he added:

"That is the Rector's room on the right; the one on the left is for his friends, when they come, which is not very often. If any one were wickedly disposed, it would be a very easy matter to climb up to those windows. Old Margot, too, is as deaf as a post."

These last words were undoubtedly true, for no response had yet come to the repeated knocks which Jacquot had given with considerable energy. At last a slipshod tread was heard, and a murmur that swelled to a growl.

"There she comes!" said Jacquot, laughing. "She does not like to be disturbed."

Old Margot, with her hair in wild disorder and a stiffly starched cap on the top of her head, was not a fascinating object of contemplation. Her voice softened somewhat as she said:

"Ah! It is you then, Madame?"

"You expected me, it seems?"

"Yes- my master told me you were coming."

Jacques listened open mouthed. Margot turned abruptly upon him, and shaking her Medusa locks, cried:

"Be off with you, you little scamp!"

And taking the lady by the arm, she drew her within the passage and shut the door in the face of the inquisitive lad, who nothing disconcerted, shook his fist after the woman.

"Some one of these fine nights," he shouted, "your neck will be twisted, and I wont lift my finger to prevent it, you old crow!"

"I am sorry that the Rector was obliged to go away; but there was another person to meet me here," said the lady.

"I know nothing about that. You are Madame Danglars, I suppose."

"Yes."

"Then there is a letter for you, I fancy. I can't read writing very well."

The old woman pulled a paper from her pocket.

"A letter for me?" cried the lady.

"Yes, if your name is on it."

"Here is my card."

And the lady impatiently took a square of pasteboard from the bag at her side. Margot spelled out the letters carefully.

"Yes, it is for you," she said, finally. "Shall I get you anything warm?"

Madame Danglars did not hear these words; she was tearing open the letter with feverish haste. She read it attentively.

"MADAME:—Unexpected circumstances—an order from my superior—calls me away, and I shall not be able to return to Beausset until to-morrow. I hope then to render you all the assistance in my power.

"I have done what was necessary to gratify your strange wish, and obtain permission for you to go through the prison of Toulon. And in this letter I

enclose a note to the Captain of the Guards, who I am sure will do all that is necessary. The Curé of Beausset being absent, you will repair at once to his house. If you will await my movements, I will be at your service in the morning."

Old Margot came out of the kitchen bearing a bowl full of some smoking liquid, the nature of which a Parisian would have found it difficult to determine.

"I shall pass the night here, Margot," said the stranger.

"Yes, I know that, and you shall have as good a night's rest as if you were at home. It is a nice, quiet house, with no one to disturb you. Everybody in the neighborhood goes to bed at seven, and a cannon fired off would not disturb them after that!"

"But the house is safe?" asked the lady, with some uneasiness.

"Bless me! Are you afraid?"

"No, not afraid; but still, I should like to know."

"Well, I can only say that I have slept here for forty years and nothing ever happened in that time!"

"Will you kindly show me the room I am to occupy?"

"Certainly, and you will like it, I am sure."

The room was large and square. The furniture was old in style and cumbrous, but this did not disturb Madame Danglars. She opened a closet on one side of the chimney. Then she turned the key in the lock several times.

"The lock is strong, I suppose?"

"Yes, as strong as the one on the Archbishop's strong box."

"I ask the question, because in the carriage box there are valuables of mine, some jewels, shawls, etc., which I wish to place where they will be secure."

"Put them in there then. Lock the door and take the key away with you; and then you can sleep as sound as a rock."

"And does the chamber door lock also?"

Old Margot began to be impatient. Why should anyone feel so insecure in her master's house, she asked herself. Could this lady be afraid of her?

She answered coldly that the lock on the door worked well, so far as she knew. Madame Danglars examined the lock for herself; then taking a key from the leather bag at her belt, she went down stairs and out to the carriage. She unlocked a box under the seat built in the post-chaise, and took out an oak box which seemed to be too heavy a load for her slender hands; but she lifted it hastily and carried it jauntily, as if unwilling for the real weight to be suspected.

"Do you suppose that is gold?" asked Jacquot.

"No," answered the postillion, "she could not carry it if it were. Gold is pretty heavy," he added, in a superior way, as if he knew all about gold.

Madame Danglars again entered her chamber. Old Margot, who had quite lost her temper by this time, did not follow her, so that the lady placed her treasure in the closet without being watched. Before she closed the closet door, however, she opened the oak box and looked in. There seemed to be only rolls of paper

but she took one of these and from it slipped out a few gold pieces and dropped them into her bag. Then closing the wardrobe as well as the door of her room and locking them, she went away, reassured by the calmness that reigned in the little white house sleeping under the olive trees. Meeting Margot at the foot of the stairs, she addressed her with a few kind words that caused the stern features of the old woman to relax.

"I shall return by five o'clock, I think," said Madame Danglars.

"Very good, I shall expect you. I hope you will not be later than five."

"I do not wish to disturb you, but—"

"Oh! Madame, that is not why I spoke; but a storm is brewing, and that gorge is an awful place in bad weather."

"Thanks; I shall make all possible speed."

The air was dry and sharp. Small white clouds were floating over the sky.

Madame Danglars threw back her vail. Poor woman, she bore little resemblance to the elegant lady who had quarrelled with her husband because she wanted horses that were worth a fortune. At that time her life was without a cloud; she lived in luxury. And then came the crash and dishonor. Her lover Debray deserted her, as did her daughter Eugénie, who fled without a word of farewell. And finally this woman, who had been guilty of conjugal faithlessness, of levity and general misconduct, learned that she was almost an accomplice in a crime—that the

child to whom she had given birth had been murdered by its father.

Later on, she knew that this child had lived; but under what circumstances did she see him? She beheld him on trial for his life, and heard the sentence of perpetual imprisonment.

But this woman was no longer a criminal; a great change had taken place in her. She had forgotten all her former tastes, her vanity and her pride, and would have given worlds could she have obliterated the past.

She had done all in her power. She had the courage to seek the forgiveness of her parents, whom she had not seen for many years. She had implored their assistance, and asked to be allowed to retire to a cloister and be forgotten. She still possessed a million—this million she offered, but when she found her self face to face with those who were to be her guides in the future, she made certain conditions.

Under the seal of confession, she admitted that Benedetto was her son. And why did this strange thrill go through her whole being as she spoke of him as her son? She had never felt the same toward Eugénie, her daughter. It was because a woman loves the child whose father she has loved. She had adored De Villefort, while she had always felt the most profound contempt for Danglars, the usurer.

Ah! had she but known her son earlier, she could have exercised a mysterious protection over him—she could have smoothed from his path every obstacle and averted every temptation. She determined at least to save his life, and had succeeded—she paid for it with

her fortune and her liberty. Alas! she cared nothing for life now, and pain, disappointment and sorrow had left their marks upon her face which only a few months earlier had been inexpressibly charming. The blonde hair of which she had been so proud had turned white, her eyes were dull and faded, her brow was lined. She trembled at times from head to foot—her heart contracted with nervous spasms. She felt a weight as if misfortune was near at hand. She was never without a sensation of fear. Poor woman! what had she now to fear? Nevertheless, the smallest noise heard by night or day caused her to start. She longed for the silence of the convent. She knew not where she was going—somewhere on the other side of the Mediterranean, away from Europe—that is all she cared to know. Never again would human ears hear the sound of her name! "To-morrow," she thought to herself, "I can relinquish this money into the hands of those who sold me my son's life, and then I am their slave! Would, too, that they would teach me to forget!"

The poor creature well knew that wheresoever she might go she should be haunted by the memory of the man who was working under a hot sun and cursing her because she was his mother, and by the memory of a girl who had left her home to become a courtesan—and this girl was her own daughter!

"We have reached the prison," said the postillion, opening the carriage door.

She shuddered, and as she stepped on the ground she said to herself—"Courage!"

CHAPTER XIII.

CONVICT LIFE.

"WHEN will Madame return to Marseilles?" asked the postillion.

"To-day—in two or three hours."

"Ah! Madame, you must not think of that—the mistral is coming up!"

"I don't understand you."

"You don't know what the mistral is, I presume. Well, then, look at the sky, breathe the air. In two hours there will be a terrible gale, and if you think you will get any postillion to go through the gorge, I am mistaken!"

"You intend by all this to say that I cannot rely on you?"

"Well, no, Madame, you can't. The carriage is yours, but the horses and postillion are quite a different matter, I assure you. We don't care to be ground to powder!"

"Then I will find another postillion and horses."

"Yes, Madame, if you can. I should like to oblige you, because you pay well. But do as you please. I am to put up at the *Armes d'Italie*, I suppose?"

"Yes—yes. I thank you for your advice, but cannot take it."

Madame Danglars turned away. She saw a guard coming, and asked to be taken to the captain. When she entered the court-yard and looked up at the frowning walls, when she saw the prisoners in their hideous livery, she was attacked by such trembling that she could not move. She struggled against this impression, and conquered.

She was shown into the rooms of the Captain of the Guard, who was absent, but speedily returned. He blustered in annoyance at being disturbed, saying, as he entered:

"It seems to me that people mistake this prison for a Minister's ante-room!"

Madame Danglars quietly looked the man full in the face, and without a word, presented the letter she had brought.

The man's face changed as by magic, and then, with the greatest possible respect, he said:

"Madame, the influence you have brought to bear is so great that I find myself obliged to transgress all the rules of this prison. I can only, however, obey the orders you have conveyed to me."

Madame Danglars knew nothing of the contents of the letter, but she did not let the officer suspect this.

"You desire an interview with one of the convicts, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"You know, of course, that this interview must take place in the presence of the chaplain?"

The poor woman was aghast at this, but managed to restrain all evidence of emotion. She had hoped to

speak freely with her son, but it was clear that she was distrusted, and she could only submit.

"The interview must take place in this room Madame, and I will send for the chaplain."

"I thank you, sir."

"It is a special favor, understand. Only yesterday some people came furnished with an order from the Minister, but they were allowed to see Benedetto only in the presence of the guards."

"What!" cried Madame Danglars, "were there people here yesterday to see him? Would it be indiscreet to ask who these people were?"

"There is no reason why I should conceal their names. It was Mademoiselle de Villefort."

"Villefort!" repeated Madame Danglars, starting.

"Yes, the daughter of the former Procureur, who has just died."

Madame Danglars uttered a stifled cry:

"Dead!"

"Yes, Madame; he died in an asylum in Paris."

Madame Danglars covered her face with her hands The sinful father had paid his last debt—the man who, in the hardness of his heart, had refused to spare him whom he knew to be his son the shame of a public trial.

"This death seems to affect you, Madame. You probably were acquainted with Monsieur de Villefort?"

"Yes—I knew him. But pardon my impatience. I am anxious to see—the man of whom you were speaking."

The official locked up the letter he had received, and

after begging the lady to be seated, went out. The wind whistled loudly, with a melancholy, sinister sound.

Finally, the door opened, and the chaplain appeared.

"Madame," he said to the stranger, who rose respectfully, "I received a note this morning, announcing your coming. I know—and he emphasized his words—"I know the interest you feel in this prisoner."

"What! You know?"

"Be at ease. The secrets that are confided to us are as sacred as those of the confessional. I shall not intrude upon you. In obedience to the orders I have received, I must remain in the room, but I neither see nor hear at such times."

The poor woman thanked him, with tears in her eyes.

Benedetto arrived.

When his mother beheld him with his striped vest and red cap, with his chain fastened to his ankle from his waist, she was overwhelmed with horror, and drew back with uplifted hands and staring eyes.

She had seen Benedetto in various salons, in all his brilliant beauty, elegant even to coxcombery, and conspicuous among the young fops of Paris. She had seen him, too, in that most repulsive court room, thundering out his accusations against his father, and had recognized in him who was her son, the terrible beauty of a fallen angel.

Of all this beauty, what remained? A hideous being, a living incarnation of shame.

The metamorphose was appalling and also entirely unexpected. She had not anticipated such a change.

She had thought only of Prince Cavalcanti, and now beheld herself face to face with this convict.

The guards stationed themselves just without the door, which the chaplain closed, and then turning to Benedetto, he said, solemnly:

"My son, remember that God is merciful to sinners who repent."

Neither he nor Madame Danglars saw the smile that contracted the lips of the convict, as cap in hand he bowed low. The chaplain went to the further window, and taking his breviary from his pocket, he began to read. He kept his word as long as he was present; he neither heard nor saw.

Madame Danglars and her son were alone. The poor woman struggled for self-control. She drew down the closely shaven head to her breast, and kissed the hot brow with maternal tenderness.

"My son, my poor boy!" she murmured, amid her tears.

"Ah! how good you are!" answered Benedetto. "I knew you would not forget your promise. Thank you, for having come."

"You have forgiven me, then?" asked his mother.

"Forgiven you! If I ever accused you, I had forgotten it. Forget in your turn, I pray you, the mad words I uttered in that prison. I was wild with despair. I was cruel and unjust."

"Ah! my son, I have suffered so much that I need your pity—"

"Yes, but I have no pity for him!"

"For him! Did you know that he was dead?"

"Yes, I know; and did he not prepare a final insult for me by sending here his daughter, the girl who bears his name, and who, while pretending to console me, offered me an intolerable insult. Yes, for she was so afraid of me, that she did not touch my hand or call me brother."

"Benedetto," said Madame Danglars, solemnly "you know that we are about to separate for ever, and I implore you to set aside all this rancor and thirst for vengeance. You are suffering, and will continue to suffer. I am about to seek refuge in a convent where no echo from the outside world will reach me. Think of me, sometimes, my son."

Benedetto extended his trembling hands. "I will obey you, mother. I will try to forget and forgive."

The infamous comedian had carried a little comfort to the aching heart of this poor woman. She suspected nothing, guessed nothing, and was thankful to believe in the filial love of this unrepentant wretch.

"It is true, then?" he asked, "you are really to leave France, and forever?"

"Yes, to-morrow I shall leave Europe forever."

"But surely, you are not going alone? Pardon these questions, but I dread such a journey for you."

"Be comforted; I travel with holy women, who will protect me."

"Ah! yes, I remember—with those to whom you have surrendered all your property. You have paid a heavy price for their protection," he added, with a sad smile.

"Not too heavy, my son," cried Madame Danglars, "have you forgotten?"

The tone was so significant that Benedetto hastily placed his hand on his neck as if to see that his head was safe on his shoulders.

This scene was a strange one. On the one side were faith, love and repentance; on the other hypocrisy and coldness. There was not a gesture on Benedetto's part, not a tone in his voice that was not measured and prepared. He was eager to ask where the million was of which she had spoken, but he did not know in what way he should frame this question. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"But with all your influence, mother—"

"My influence?" she interrupted. "Surely you know that Monsieur Danglars has disappeared, ruined and dishonored—"

"No, I did not know it. You made a *mésalliance*, mother, and the less said about it the better. But I thought you could obtain my pardon."

"Oh! my child, I have done everything I could!"

"I thank you, mother, for all your exertions, but I do not think you should have given up all your property to these people without further promises from them."

"I have not given it to them yet!" cried Madame Danglars, eagerly.

Poor creature! She had not the smallest idea of the commotion excited by these words in the breast of the guilty man before her. Her "no, no," meant in

her eyes only that she might yet bargain for mercy for him.

But Cavalcanti, the hungry brute, said to himself, "She has the money still!" He took both her hands in his.

"Is this money, then, I forget how much it was—is it still in your possession?"

"Yes; I do not relinquish it until to-morrow."

"But you have given your promise?"

"Yes, but I know these people so well, that I shall not hesitate to make another appeal to them."

"You know my miserable childhood," said Benedetto. "I was brought up among the basest of scoundrels; is it my fault, then, that I grew to be like them If you could read my heart—"

He, as his mother thought, unconsciously gathered up the chain that hung from his waist, and pressed the links against his breast.

"You would then see that I meant to be an honest man, that my heart was good. I committed evil, I know that, but my nature always revolted against it."

His mother sighed deeply.

"I do not accuse you, mother. We are the playthings of a superior power; but I long to be an honest man. I think of myself, sometimes, living in a little house, having about me wife and happy children. I see myself toiling for their support, and I rouse myself from my idle dreams with the words, 'It is too late!'"

"Too late! No, do not say that!" cried the mother

"Yes, for what can I do by myself? My penitent

may bring alleviations, I have been released from the double chain, but pardon and liberty are impossible!"

His mother interrupted him hastily. "What can I do? I have a million still in gold and bank-notes, and I would give it all to ensure you a safe and happy future—"

Benedetto started violently.

"Yes, I would give it all," his mother continued, "but why should I speak of money—I would give my life, my eternal salvation—"

Benedetto drew her to his breast and held her so closely that the poor woman felt the iron chain.

"Mother!" he murmured, in a voice so gentle that it reached her very soul.

"Speak, my son."

"Where will you sleep to-night?" he asked.

She told him all; how she was to be at the Rectory in the little village, and that the Rector was himself away.

"Oh! if I could but join you there!" sighed Benedetto; "but I am mad! I am chained here; I implore you to think of me to-night. Tell me, it is a mere whim, but I should like to know what you will do to-day when you leave here?"

A terrible blast of wind came against the window. It was the mistral at last. She did not hear it. She was listening only to her son's voice.

"I shall go back to Beausset as soon as possible. I must go through the gorge, of course, and I dread it. The postillion has refused to drive me back, but I can find another, of course."

"Then you will remain a few hours in Toulon?"

"Not longer than I can avoid!" she answered.

"Are you not afraid to have such a sum at the Rectory?"

"I have taken every precaution. The box is locked up, and I am not frightened."

When this interview was over, Benedetto knew precisely where to find the oak box, and his mother had described the Rectory; he told her that he wished to know the place where his mother should spend her last night in France.

The storm had now burst in all its violence. The sky was covered with clouds.

The priest turned.

"Madame," he said, "this interview must close. The guard are coming for the prisoner."

She uttered a little cry, for the coming separation she knew to be eternal.

"Bless me, my mother!" murmured Benedetto.

Madame Danglars laid her trembling hands on her son's head.

"May God watch over you!" she murmured.

The guard appeared. Benedetto kissed his mother's hands, and then, with a theatrical gesture, turned on his heel and followed the guard.

Madame Danglars was now in haste to leave this mournful place. She thanked the chaplain.

"Take this," she said, handing him the *rouleau* of a thousand francs that she had put into her bag, "and if there be any sorrow here, or any hardship, that money can soften, use it in my name."

When she stood without the great door she was confused by her emotions and the tumult of the storm. She heard the roar of the sea. "Have pity on me!" she ejaculated, as she drew her cloak about her, and made her way to the inn where her carriage had been taken.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ESCAPE.

"WELL?" said Sanselme to Benedetto, who was so pale that he was terrible to look upon. His companion feared that the project he had so long cherished had been crushed to the ground.

Benedetto did not at once reply. He was seated on a pile of boards, indifferent to the blast that whistled about his ears.

"The million?" asked Sanselme, anxiously, "is it quite safe?"

"What is that you say?" growled Benedetto, as if aroused by these words. "The million? Yes, it is ours."

"Then speak!" Sanselme exclaimed.

Benedetto frowned.

"What is our work to-day?"

"To carry this timber on board the sailing vessel anchored near the pontoon. But there is no need to think of that. With a wind like this no outside work can be done, and we shall be let alone, I fancy."

"Are we not to make our escape?"

"Of course we are! It is a very easy matter too."

"Listen to me. The moment has come when I shall

know whether you have been deceiving me. In two hours we must be free."

"And we will be. But if we succeed in getting out of this prison, what are we to do? Where are we to go? Have you any plans?"

"Do you know the village of Beausset?"

"Yes, indeed, at the mouth of the gorge."

"Do you think we can ever get there? If we make our escape by daylight, we shall be brought back at once."

"But it is not broad daylight. The clouds are massing together; in two hours the darkness will be intense."

"And then we shall be shut in for the night!"

"That is of no consequence, for it is from that point we start. Have you forgotten Rodebois?"

"Pray, do not begin that infernal joke again."

"Do I look as if I were joking? You have already seen that Rodebois carries about him a wonderful little file, which will set us free from our fetters in half an hour. Rodebois is at work for us at this moment. If you wish to know the whole story, take hold of this timber and carry it with me. Returning from the merchant vessel, after leaving the timber there, we will pass the pontoon and all shall be made clear to you."

The two men lifted their heavy load to their shoulders. The fierce wind whistled around them, so that it was with difficulty that they maintained their footing on the narrow passage made of boards, laid from the shore to the merchant ship.

"Steady now!" said Sanselme.

On their return, they slipped from the planks on board the pontoon, which during the day was always empty. Their sleeping place was excessively small, and Benedetto had several times wished to complain, but had been prevented by Sanselme. As they entered the dark recess, Benedetto felt some creature pass him. He uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Hush!" said Sanselme, "it is Rodebois, and he does not like to be disturbed. Lie down," he continued, "and pass your hand over the side of the vessel close to the floor. Do you feel anything?"

"Yes; something like a crack in the wood?"

"That is what Rodebois has done. And I assure you that he has worked hard in the last month."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Just this. While we toiled under the rod of the overseer, Rodebois has been using his sharp teeth on the half rotten wood of this old ship. You were astonished when you saw me gather up every scrap of fat meat, which the dogs themselves would not touch. Well, then, I rubbed part of this wood with it every day—an inch perhaps. Rodebois, like a creature of sense as he is, gnawed where I rubbed the grease, and now we have but to push out this panel with one blow, and we can get out."

"Into what?"

"You will see. Benedetto, you have had no faith in me, but you will learn that I am a man to keep my promises, whatever they may be. At five o'clock we will leave this ship."

"We must swim then?"

"Are you afraid?"

"Not at all! but I certainly do not wish to die, when before me lies fortune, a future, and vengeance!"

"Bravo! that is the way to talk; but we must not linger here, lest our secret should be surprised."

"One word more. Our clothing?"

"Do you suppose that I did not think of that? You will see."

Benedetto was impressed with his companion's shrewdness, but he was uneasy and wild to be off.

The tempest had become so violent that all work was suspended. The guards assembled the prisoners and counted them, having the idea that they might some of them take advantage of the storm to try to make their escape. It was impossible to remain out of doors. One man had been swept by the violence of the wind against an iron stanchion, and been seriously injured.

The darkness increased until it became almost total. The ships in the harbor heaved like monstrous animals in convulsions. Sailors shouted. The chains of the anchors creaked, and sudden crashes came from time to time, occasioned by the fall of a mast.

The convicts were greatly frightened, and the terror of the guards by no means soothed them.

Benedetto and Sanselme went to their recess. The chains were all fastened and every thing made ready for the night several hours earlier than usual. The old ship creaked and heaved.

"Are you ready?" asked Sanselme.

Benedetto answered with a quick "yes."

"You understand that it is at the risk of our lives?"

"What of that?"

As we have said, the noise of the storm was so deafening that all lesser noises were drowned. This facilitated the operations of our two convicts, and in a quarter of an hour they had filed through the iron rings around their ankles. Then, Sanselme pushed open the panel gnawed by Rodebois, and from a corner drew out a bundle of clothes enveloped in an India rubber cover. This panel communicated with a long passage, in which worn-out tools and other useless things had been accumulating for years. A hatch at the end, shut by iron bars, opened on the sea. Its hinges had been well greased, and it easily opened The darkness was profound, and the water was heard several feet below.

Sanselme said:

"I will go out first. You will hand the bundle to me, then you will follow, and we will be off!"

It needed great courage to make this venture on a night like this, for the risk was great of being thrown with violence by wind and water against some one of the ships lying near. But the two men were endowed with indomitable energy.

Benedetto followed the directions he had received. He dropped into the water, and the two men disappeared.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MOUNTAIN GORGE.

MADAME DANGLARS hastened back to the Hôtel, and reached it almost exhausted by the violence of the storm. But, welcome as was the shelter, she was eager to leave it again, for her horror had become almost ungovernable—horror of those grim walls where there was so much suffering which she was powerless to relieve.

"Quick!" she said, "I must have horses at once!"

But the innkeeper respectfully replied that it was impossible to obey her orders, for no one would risk horses in such terrible weather; and even if the lady should buy them, no postillion could be found.

The lady opened her purse, and offered twenty louis to any one who would drive her.

"Madame," said the innkeeper, "I know only one man in Toulon who would consent to risk his bones and those of his horses for any such sum."

"Bring that man here!" was the reply of Madame Danglars.

"I will send for him, Madame," answered the innkeeper, emphasizing the word "send," as if his dignity were wounded. "But you must have a little patience, for this man is not always to be found."

"He can't be out in such weather as this!"

"Ah! Madame begins to see that a mistral is no joke. Madame had best make up her mind to wait until to-morrow—our beds are comfortable, our cuisine excellent."

"I beg you to send for this man at once!" interrupted the lady.

An hour passed, and then another. Finally, the messenger returned. The man was found at a cabaret, and said he would be at the inn at four o'clock.

"Who is this man?" asked Madame Danglars, who had been struck by the word "cabaret."

"Oh! a good fellow enough—a former pensioner of that establishment." And the innkeeper pointed to the prison. "He worked out his twenty years' sentence, and now amuses himself; he fears neither God nor the devil!"

"But can he drive?"

"Drive! I should say he could. He was tried and condemned for robbing the mails which he carried on his stage coach."

This was said in the most natural manner. The lady hesitated for a moment. After all, she need not be afraid. There was no harm in the man—the innkeeper said as much.

"You need not be uneasy, Madame," concluded the innkeeper, "Father Jacob would not harm a fly."

At the hour he had named, Father Jacob made his appearance. He was a rough-looking man, with an evil face.

Madame Danglars rose to meet him, and hastily said:

"You are to drive me to Beausset?"

"For twenty Napoleons—yes, Madame."

"Then let us start at once!"

"You will pay in advance?"

"Yes," said the lady, eager to finish all discussion.

"Let me tell you, Madame, that it is a hard job I am to undertake. And it will be hard for you, too."

"I know that, but I must go."

"Very good."

The former convict speedily harnessed the horses, who tossed their heads uneasily as the keen breeze struck their faces, as it whistled through the courtyard.

The clock struck five as Madame Danglars took her seat in the carriage and drew the warm rugs about her. As she drove past the prison, she sobbed bitterly, for she left there all her Past, and had now turned her face toward an unknown Future.

The storm redoubled in violence, and the poor woman shivered with cold and terror. She covered her ears with her hands, and burst into a paroxysm of tears—a tempest was within as well as without. She heard the voice of the coachman inciting his horses; she heard the crash of falling trees, and then felt a violent shock that threw her into the bottom of the carriage. One of the horses was down. The coachman sprang to the ground with an oath, seized the animal by the nose, and by main force brought him to his feet again. Then he went to the carriage door, and opened it.

"We can't do it!" he said, gruffly. "I must give you back your money."

The sharp wind cut the face of Madame Danglars like a knife.

"Where are we?" she gasped.

"The devil only knows! In the gorge, somewhere Listen to that torrent—it has swept almost over the road already!"

"But we can't stay here: What is to become of me?"

"Zounds, Madame! Do you think I would desert you? I am not a bad man, but this awful gorge has always brought me ill luck. It was here that, thirty years ago, I came to grief!" This allusion was an unfortunate one. He continued: "I should much like to earn your money, but it can't be done!"

"You must make one more attempt, and you will have your reward. Try once more!"

"Ah! Madame, your courage is wonderful, but you must be reasonable. The only thing we can do is to walk slowly on to the village. There I can find some other vehicle, and in the meantime this wind may go down. It can't last long at this rate, take my word for it!"

"You promise that we shall go on to-night?"

"I give you the word of a man who never yet broke his promise."

Madame Danglars agreed to this plan; in fact, there was nothing else to be done. She left the carriage, and Father Jacob led the horses. A fine rain began to fall.

"Good!" said the coachman. "That will break the wind, but I think we had best hasten!"

It seemed to Madame Danglars that she was under the influence of a nightmare. She felt drowsy, her feet were very cold and wet, but she did not realize it. She stumbled and nearly fell. Father Jacob caught her and held her up with one vigorous arm, while around the other was wrapped the bridle by which he was leading the horses.

"Come, now," he said, "we are nearly there." He stopped short and listened. "That is an odd noise!" he said, half aloud, and at the same moment a dark object fell at his feet. "Where did this come from?" he said, picking it up, and examining it by the light of his lantern.

Madame Danglars looked also.

"Ah, ha!" said Father Jacob, "one bird has flown, I see, and I wish him good luck!"

"But what is it?" asked Madame Danglars, trembling from head to foot.

"Ah! you don't know this thing as well as I!"

And Father Jacob put a convict's cap on his head, and to make his meaning clearer to his companion, raised his lantern that she might see.

Strangely enough, this cap imparted to the rough postillion a most sinister aspect. Madame Danglars recognized the cap, having seen it on her son's head only a few hours before. She uttered a wild shriek, and lifted her hands to thrust the hated object further away. He calmly removed the cap.

"I beg your pardon, Madame, for frightening you. I ought to have known better."

"But how did that cap come here?"

"I picked it up, as you saw, and it simply proves that a convict has made his escape."

These two strange companions were now walking very rapidly—the wind had greatly lulled.

Madame Danglar's strength seemed to have returned.

"The first idea of an escaped convict," said Father Jacob, musingly, "is to get rid of these prison badges, and this one has probably flung his cap away."

"And must be near here?" asked the lady, her heart contracting with a strange presentiment.

"That does not follow, Madame, a wind like this might carry a cap miles; but I see the lights of the Inn. You have not far to go, and in ten minutes we will make another start, as the wind is pretty well over."

As he spoke, Father Jacob opened the door of the Inn, and Madame Danglars following him, found herself in a low room filled with men, smoking, drinking and disputing. Jacob told the innkeeper what he wanted, and the two went out to assure themselves that the horses were uninjured.

On the table Jacob had laid the convict's cap, and when the woman of the inn went up to Madame Danglars to ask if she should get her anything, she saw the cap and exclaimed:

"Where did that come from? A convict's cap, and one condemned to imprisonment for life."

"The postillion picked it up on the road," said Madame Danglars, gently. "He thought that one of the prisoners had escaped, and that his cap had blown down the gorge."

"Do you hear that, boys?" cried the woman, turning to the men who were drinking and smoking. "You were wanting work a little while ago, and here it is ready to your hand."

Madame Danglars listened without understanding.

"You know," continued the wife of the innkeeper to the lady, "that if this escaped prisoner is caught, there is a reward of a hundred francs."

"And we intend to have it!" said a small, ugly man, rising from his chair.

"Divide! Divide!" shouted two others, coming forward.

"What do they mean?" asked Madame Danglars of the woman.

"Only that they intend to look for this prisoner. They know every hole and corner of the country hereabout, and can bag their game."

"And then?"

"They will take him to Toulon and receive their hundred francs."

"Poor creature!" said the mother. "How can they hunt him down as if he were an animal?"

"They need the money, Madame. And then, too, these prisoners are very desperate men—they rob and they kill. It is better for every one that they should be retaken."

Suddenly the man who was examining the cap, said:

"This is almost new; it has been little worn."

"Is there no number inside?" asked some one.

"Yes, No. 88."

Madame Danglars rose to her feet deadly pale, for

she had been struck to the heart. No. 88. She had seen it on Benedetto's cap. Could it be possible that he had made his escape?

"Let me see," she said, extending her hand.

There was no mistake, No. 88 was there; and she remembered that she had mechanically noticed these figures when Benedetto held his cap in his hand. It was plain that her son had escaped, and now she heard these men calmly talking of pursuing him and returning him to that terrible place from which he had fled. And it was she who had betrayed him, for it was her fault that they were walking through the gorge when the wind brought the cap to the feet of Father Jacob She forgot the tempest, the broken carriage, and the innumerable fatalities against which she was powerless to struggle.

"The best thing for us to do," said one of the men, "is to start at once, before anybody else gets hold of this chance. One more glass, boys, and we will be off!"

Madame Danglars drew her purse from her pocket.

"Gentlemen," she said, "listen to me for a moment. I beg of you not to go in search of this unhappy creature. It is a caprice on my part for which I am willing to pay, and I will give you two hundred."

There was a long silence. The men examined with surprise this lady, evidently of high position, who showed such interest in a convict; but the two hundred francs settled the point.

"It is awful weather, certainly," said one.

"And as much money as that is not picked up every day in the year," interposed another.

"But there are three of us, Madame?" added an eager voice.

"And here are three hundred francs for you," answered Madame Danglars.

"But Madame, if he is not taken to-night he will be caught to-morrow, that is certain."

"Possibly!" and the poor woman sank upon a bench. "I will tell you the truth. I was at the prison, to-day, and my heart aches with pity. I went to help one at least of those poor creatures. Let this one have a chance, I beg of you."

"All right, Madame, I accept your proposition," said the small man. The other two did the same.

"And you give me your word to do this man no harm, even if he should come across your path."

"We swear it!"

Madame Danglars experienced a brief moment of joy, when suddenly a pistol shot was heard, and a voice louder than the tempest shouted:

"Help! Help! I have caught one."

All the men in the cabaret rushed out, leaving Madame Danglars alone. With an agonized face and hands clasped over her heart, she waited.

"Thief! Liar!" cried Father Jacob, without. "You wanted my horses, did you?"

"Yes, I did, but the game is lost!" answered a voice which was not that of Benedetto.

And as the fellow was dragged in by the robust hands of his adversaries, she saw his face. It was not her son. She had been mistaken then, in supposing that

the number on the cap belonged to Benedetto. The innkeeper questioned Father Jacob.

"I was at the back of the stable," he said, "stooping down, when I heard a noise, and looking around saw two men, or rather two dark shadows, leading out my horses. I had a pistol in my pocket, and just as the men leaped in the saddle I fired. One man fell—this is he."

"And the other?"

"He disappeared in the direction of the gorge; but I swear I will have him."

The mother heard these words, and was certain that this other was Benedetto. What should she do to rescue him?

Sanselme, for it was he, was by this time securely tied.

"Now a glass of brandy and water," said Father Jacob, "to give me strength to catch the other rascal."

Madame Danglars went to Sanselme's side, and in a low voice, said:

"Was not Benedetto with you?"

Sanselme started and looked attentively at Madame Danglars.

"The lady of the note!" he murmured. "Do you not know me? It was to me that you gave that letter for Benedetto."

"Yes, yes—but was it he?"

"It was he."

"I must rescue him. Help me. I will make you rich."

Sanselme's eyes flashed. Rich! Was this then the

woman who had the million? He looked around the room. Father Jacob was drinking his glass of brandy and water. He had laid his pistol on the table near the door.

"Cut the cords," said Sanselme, "there is a knife within reach of your hand."

Madame Danglars instantly laid her hand on the knife, and standing in front of Sanselme, deftly cut the cords that bound him.

"Good!" said Sanselme; "now walk toward the door, and be ready to go out!"

The door was not closed. Madame Danglars took her stand near it, nervous but watchful.

"And now, good-night," said Father Jacob.

At this moment, Sanselme bounded to his feet, snatched his pistol, and seizing Madame Danglars with one strong arm, as if she had been a child, pulled the door to behind him, and held it firmly. Madame Danglars understood. She had been a fearless horsewoman, and was in the saddle in one second. Sanselme abandoned the door, fired his pistol among the men who appeared on the threshold, and sprang upon the animal who dashed off like the wind, bearing the two fugitives.

CHAPTER XVI.

HIS MOTHER.

WHEN Sanselme and Benedetto reached the stable, the sight of the two horses was an inspiration. We know what then took place. Benedetto, escaping the shot fired by the postillion, had ridden away at full speed. Sanselme had given him a full description of the road, which he was to follow in order to reach Beausset, and the Rectory was the first house.

At the rate of speed which Benedetto forced the animal he rode to keep up, it was not long before he neared Beausset, and then the exhausted creature uttered an almost human cry of anguish, and fell dead.

As often happens in that climate after the mistral, the night was now superbly clear. There was no moon, but the stars were strangely brilliant.

Benedetto looked around. Not a movement; not a sound. He knew that he had not a moment to lose. He was certain that Sanselme had been taken and that it had been discovered that he had a companion. They would come in search of him at once; but unless Sanselme had betrayed him, they would never imagine that he had stopped at Beausset. They would think that he had gone directly on toward

Marseilles. Following the directions given him by Sanselme, Benedetto walked on a few rods, and saw the church tower against the clear sky. Next the church was a small house, which was, of course, the Rectory.

Madame Danglars had minutely described the room given to her. "I wish to see in my imagination the room my mother will occupy to-night," Benedetto had said. And to gratify this touching curiosity she had gone into the smallest detail, and told, moreover, how old Margot would not be awakened by a cannon fired in her ear.

Before the windows was a gaunt olive tree, its long limbs grazing the walls. Benedetto climbed this tree, and, standing in the crotch, found he could reach the window.

Suddenly the wretch shivered. What if he should find himself face to face with his mother? What if she should scream for aid?

"So much the worse for her then!" he muttered, as holding his knife between his teeth, he raised the window with both hands.

In a moment more he stood in the room.

In the package prepared by Sanselme long before and hidden in the pontoon, there were besides the clothing, two knives, matches and a lantern.

Benedetto listened. Not a sound! If his mother were there she was asleep. He lighted a match, and then the lantern. The bed was vacant. Accident had prevented this wretch from perpetrating an odious crime.

"The storm has detained her," he said to himself, as he looked about for the closet which was near the chimney. He instantly pressed the lock back with his knife. It made a sharp click, and Benedetto started. He was not afraid of anything but of being compelled to commit another crime.

He lifted his lantern, and peered into the closet. Yes, the box was there. An oak box with corners of steel. He felt as if he should suffocate. Here was the million! He seized the box, but could not open it with his knife.

"Suppose I am mistaken!" he muttered, as he tried to force it open.

Suddenly he heard the furious gallop of a horse, coming nearer and nearer.

Beads of sweat stood on Benedetto's brow. Who could it be! How had his pursuers so soon got upon his track?

He rushed to the window, but the branches of the olive tree obstructed his sight, but that made little difference, he must fly, and take his booty with him. Again he began to doubt if the oak box contained that of which he was in search, but he could see nothing else. Either this woman—his mother—had lied to him, or he held the million in his arms.

The sound of the galloping horse suddenly stopped. It was plain that he was pursued, but it was certainly strange that only one person should be on his track. He went again to the window and opened it wide. He could surely go out the same way he had come in

But no, when he entered both hands were free; now he had the box.

He had extinguished the lantern from precaution, and there he stood stupid and half-stunned, not knowing how to escape. He knew that he could not jump and catch the tree unless he left the box behind him, and he dared not try the door. But why not? there was no sound in the house. He ran to the door, but Madame Danglars had securely fastened it and the lock was too cumbrous to be easily broken. It was useless to try to force the lock; he could take out the screws, to be sure, but that would take too long. However, he decided that there was nothing else to be done; he had drawn three screws, and there was not a sound in the house. It was possible that the person on horseback belonged next door.

Suddenly he heard a step on the stairs, and more than one. What was to be done? He resolved to part with his life rather than his million. He pressed the box to his breast, and stood in the corner near the door with his knife upraised. He would strike, and then leap down the stairs.

The door opened; a figure appeared dimly discerned by the light of a lantern carried by another person. Benedetto raised his arm and struck a fierce, terrific blow, burying the knife in the flesh up to the hilt. At the same moment Benedetto was seized by the throat and thrown on the floor.

"Wretch!" hissed a voice in his ear, "your mother, and you knew it!"

Madame Danglars had not made a sound. She knew

who had struck her, and had sufficient self-control not to scream, lest this scream should be a signal for the arrest of her son, and writhing on the floor she said:

"You have killed me, Benedetto, but you did not know it. Ah! believe me," and she raised herself on her elbow and spoke to Sanselme, "believe me, he did not know me. Let him go! Oh! let him go!"

Sanselme released Benedetto, whom he now knew to be the son of this woman. Madame Danglars had told him so during their dizzy ride. He remembered, too, that the convict had said that he would have this million at any price, even if it were that of a murder, and the wretch had thus calmly discussed the possibility of murdering his mother!

The poor woman clasped her nerveless hands.

"Come closer," she said, "I must speak to you."

Sanselme bent over her.

"What can I do for you? I am a base wretch, but tell me what you wish and I swear to obey you."

"Swear, then, to let my son go—do not denounce him nor follow him. Swear!"

Sanselme took the hands of the dying woman in his, tenderly and firmly.

"I swear!" he said.

"Thanks!" she murmured, faintly. "And Benedetto, I forgive you. Kiss me!"

Sanselme seized Benedetto, who stood stupidly staring, and crushed him to the earth. His mother lifted her arms, but before she could touch Benedetto, she sank back dead!

Benedetto rose to his feet, and Sanselme saw on his

face a frightful expression of triumph. He snatched the box, which he had momentarily abandoned.

"The million is ours!" he said. "Come!"

Sanselme raised his arm in a paroxysm of rage, but checked himself. "I have sworn!" he murmured, "I have sworn!" And turning to Benedetto, "Go!" he said, "you are free!"

"But the million! You have not understood!"

Sanselme snatched the dagger from the breast of the dead woman, and holding it high, cried aloud:

"Go!—go at once lest I kill you!"

And Benedetto, hugging the box, disappeared down the stairs.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SEA.

A WEEK had elapsed since this terrible night. A little sloop was tossing on the waves of the Mediterranean. The sea was high, and the captain of the sloop was shouting forth his orders. Suddenly the wind swept away a sail, with a strange ripping sound, and the mast cracked. Gennaro, the captain—a famous smuggler—seized an axe and cut away the mast, finishing the work begun by the tempest. Not one of his men offered to assist him.

"By Jove!" cried Gennaro, "what are you all about? Are you blind and deaf?"

"Captain," answered the boldest among the crew, "we are all willing to obey you, but what is the good? Our fate is sealed!"

"Cowards! Have we not weathered worse storms than this?"

"Yes, Captain, but then—"

"Then what? Speak, or I will blow out your brains!"

"We had not such a passenger on board, and so long as we have that one, there will be no luck for us."

And the sailors, superstitious like all Italians, crossed themselves.

Gennaro looked in the direction to which the sailors pointed and saw a man lying flat on the deck. His face was hidden, and he held a bundle in his arms.

Subdued by terror, he had lain thus for hours, all through the tempest, shaken from time to time by nervous tremblings.

"That man!" said Gennaro, "what nonsense! Why should he be unlucky, and bring you misfortune?"

"Captain, when we took him on board, he was covered with blood!"

"Well! what of that?"

"Did you not see that his head had been shaved, just like a convict?"

The big Captain laughed aloud.

"It seems to me, boys, that you are nowadays very delicate. I think a good many of you have had your heads shaved; for example, Pietro."

Pietro said, proudly: "I only killed a coast guard, that was no crime!"

"And you, Rosario?"

"Oh! I? I was jealous, that is all."

"Yes, you are saints, I understand; but what do you suppose this man has done?"

"We know not, but we are sure that he has committed some terrible crime, and God intends to punish us for harboring him. We are lost!"

These sinister predictions seemed to be justified, for the sea rose higher and higher. Gennaro, with folded arms, stood thinking. He was, to a certain extent, an honest man, but an active smuggler between the coasts of Italy and France.

Four days ago, when at anchor near Saint Tropez, a man had come to him and offered an enormus sum to be taken on board and landed on the coast of Italy. This man spoke Italian with a certain Corsican accent, which Gennaro instantly recognized. He also made up his mind that the applicant was an escaped convict, though he wore a broad-brimmed hat pulled well down over his eyes. But, after all, what did this matter to Gennaro? He was well paid, and in advance. "Come," said Gennaro, without a question.

The unknown stood apart on the deck in moody silence. When the sloop was fairly on its way, Gennaro saw him rub his hands together in evident triumph. It was plain to Gennaro that he was right and that it was a fugitive whom he had taken on board but he did not trouble himself on that score, as Gennaro was not a man of many scruples. But he had now begun to believe with his sailors that ever since this man came on board, the sloop had been unlucky. The first accident was the carrying away of one of the sails, and then the rudder was injured, and now for two days the sloop had been struggling with the most formidable tempest that Gennaro had ever seen on the Mediterranean.

Gennaro came from Lucca, and was intensely superstitious, and soon came to the conclusion after the suggestions made by his sailors, that it was the presence of the fugitive that had caused all these misfortunes.

He called his mate, who was stout and hearty and not given to sentiment

"What do you think, Millo?" he asked, "shall we get through this?"

"With the assistance of God—we can do little—"

At this moment a monstrous wave broke over the vessel and knocked a hole in her side.

"To the pumps! to the pumps!" cried Gennaro.

The instinct of self-preservation was so strong that the sailors forgot their superstitious fears, and hurried to obey these orders. Two remained on deck.

"Do you wish to be drowned, Pietro?" said one.

"Not I, but I see no chance for us—"

"There may be one, though."

The two men exchanged a meaning glance, and then looked toward the unknown who had not made a movement.

Then they looked at each other again.

"There is the trouble, Pietro. If we don't do some thing, we shall be wrecked on the island of Elba within the next fifteen minutes!"

"And if—?" The sailor made a significant gesture.

"The bad luck would leave us."

"I don't see why we should hesitate."

"Hush! If you let it out, the captain will defend him. Let me see to it!"

Pietro, whose plan seemed to have been made long since, approached the man, and touched him on the shoulder.

"Hallo!" he said, "do you know that we are going to the bottom?"

The unknown half rose, still hugging his bundle

to his breast, and replied sullenly that he did not believe it.

"And if you wish to save yourself, you had better be stirring."

The man stood on his feet, but without laying down the bundle.

"We must look out for ourselves!" whispered Pietro in his ear. "We have got the boat down, my shipmate and I, for this old hulk will sink in five minutes. If you want to go with us you may, for you have money and can pay your way."

Worn out with anxiety and bodily fatigue, these words conveyed to Benedetto little more than that he was in danger and could be saved. This wretch was horribly afraid of death.

"Answer—there is no time to lose!" said Pietro.

"What am I to do?"

"Get into the boat as quickly as possible, before any one sees you!"

The night was dark, and the proposal was a cowardly one, since it took away the only boat belonging to the vessel, but this was nothing to Benedetto. He listened a moment, and heard Gennaro's voice above the tempest, and the shouts and confusion.

"You hear?" said Pietro. "We are lost—will you come?"

Guided by Pietro, Benedetto staggered along the deck to the side of the sloop, still hugging the treasure for which he had paid so terrible a price. Suddenly he was seized and thrown into the boiling wave.

Benedetto uttered one wild yell, which was lost in the wind and storm. He still clung to the oak box. He sank once and then rose to the surface, swimming vigorously with the assistance of one arm, but he had now little hope of life. He was dashed hither and thither by the waves. Suddenly he felt a shock—a sharp blow on his forehead.

Had the parricide expiated his crime by death?

CHAPTER XVIII.

MONTE-CRISTO.

THE wind has fallen. The Mediterranean lies pure and calm under the pale wintry sun. A beautiful yacht is flying over the water, displaying a scarlet pennant. On the deck stands a man with head uncovered, enveloped in a cloak, the folds of which admirably drape his magnificent form. With arms crossed upon his breast, he looks into vacancy, seemingly absorbed in thought. A gentle hand is laid on his shoulder, and a woman of marvellous beauty, clothed in some Eastern fabric, stood beside him. The man turned with his heart in his eyes as, gently drawing her to his breast, he pressed his lips on the dark ripples of her hair.

"I love you, oh! my master," murmured the beautiful creature.

He, with a smile, responded by another kiss.

"The tempest has not clouded your brow, my Haydée," he said. "Were you not afraid?"

"Afraid, when you were near? Afraid, when you watched over me?" answered the young Greek.

"Child, do you not know that Nature is stronger than Man?"

"But God is stronger than Nature," said Haydée, with adoration in her solemn eyes.

"In an hour, my Haydée, we shall reach our destination—the last stage of the pilgrimage which I have sworn to make!"

"Yes, I know—the Island of Monte-Cristo—and there you have promised to reveal to me the mystery of your life."

"Which you make so happy, Haydée. Yes, I will tell you everything, and your clear conscience shall be my judge."

"Ah! love, that is impossible—I am unworthy!"

"No, child, your conscience is unsullied, and if you can absolve me, I shall believe that God will be merciful and will approve my conduct."

At this moment a rough-looking, gray-headed sailor appeared, cap in hand.

"You wish to land, sir, at Monte-Cristo?"

"Yes—and you, Jacopo, will remain on board with your men. Only Bertuccio and Ali will accompany me. I shall remain on shore only a few hours. Tell Ali to come to me."

Jacopo bowed low and went away, and presently Ali appeared, as intelligent and faithful as ever. This Nubian was invaluable to his master.

"Ali," said Monte-Cristo, "have you carried out my instructions?"

Ali laid his arms in the form of a cross upon his breast, and bowed his head in assent.

"You understand? You know that you risk your life?"

The same sign of submission from the faithful servant.

"It is well—you can go."

"You frighten me!" said Haydée, clinging to Monte-Cristo. "Poor Ali is so devoted to you! If we should lose him!"

"Do not be anxious, child. There is no peril for one who does his duty!"

The Alcyon—such was the name of the yacht—fairly flew over the water, cutting through the blue waves of the Mediterranean. Monte-Cristo stood with eyes fixed on the horizon, where the sharply defined points of the rocky island began to be seen. Leaning on his shoulder, in a charming attitude of love and confidence, stood Haydée, the beloved of the Count, who preferred to be the idolized slave rather than the Countess. Behind this noble pair was Ali, like a marble statue, ready to obey the smallest signal of him who had saved his life, and whom he adored as he did the mysterious gods of his own land.

The yacht moved swiftly on, leaving a silvery track in her wake, and the gray rocks before them seemed to stretch forth greeting arms.

Monte-Cristo was very thoughtful; for some time poignant doubts had been troubling his conscience. He had suffered tortures that no other human being could have endured. Innocent as he was, he had been compelled to submit to the caprice of the powerful as if he had been the vilest of criminals. It was ten years since Jacopo had received him when he was saved by the sailors of the *Jeune Amélie*, and it was precisely fourteen years since the cowardice of Caderousse, the infamy of Fernand, the complicity of

Danglars, and the ambition of Villefort, had consigned him to a prison. Ten years since his escape! And what strange things he had seen in those years! Every one of his enemies had been crushed—Villefort had died two months since in an insane asylum; Fernand de Morcerf had committed suicide to escape dishonor; Caderousse murdered; Danglars a fugitive and ruined. He alone was left to look back on these strange events. A great joy and triumph swelled his heart at good having thus conquered evil. When the Abbé Faria had given over to him Spada's treasure he had said: "I am half afraid that I shall awaken in you a criminal sentiment—that of a thirst for vengeance!" And Monte-Cristo asked himself if death were to come to him that day and hour, if he could say honestly: "I have done my duty—I have done all my duty!" This treasure, this enormous force, placed in the power of one man, had he used as the donor desired? Faria had wished the treasure to be appropriated to the Italian cause—the independence and unity of Italy. And he, Edmond Dantes, what use had he made of this marvellous wealth which had raised him above Kings and Princes? He had merely punished a few despicable wretches.

It was not merely for this wealth that he was indebted to the old prisoner. Did he not owe him also the thirst for justice and the rapid vision which characterized him?

It was not for these narrow projects that Faria had bequeathed to him the treasure he so idolized; and

within the depths of his conscience Monte-Cristo heard a still small voice crying:

"No. Your duty is broader than this; your sphere wider. You must work for Humanity."

"Friend," said Haydée's sweet voice, "what are those enormous rocks to which we seem to be going so dangerously near?"

The Count did not reply. The island of Monte-Cristo lay before him. And from the granite peaks he seemed to see a sort of halo rising, amid which he could read in letters of fire the one word, that was even now burning into his conscience. This word was *Justice*. Raising his hand, Monte-Cristo pronounced an oath that only God heard. An oath to render back to mankind the treasure he had received in trust. He swore to obtain justice for all. Justice for the good, as well as for the wicked—Justice for those who struggle overburthened and weary along the straight and narrow way—Justice for the disinherited people or individuals—for all who struggle against poverty and fate.

He pressed a kiss on Haydée's brow, saying:

"That is the island of Monte-Cristo, child. There, ten years ago, I for the first time put my foot upon the path from which I have not since deviated. From this point I shall, a few hours hence, take a new departure, having no longer anger in my heart, nor doubt, nor yet hatred, but faith, patience, and kindliness."

"Master," said a voice behind him, "have you any orders to give about landing?"

"No, Bertuccio. Nothing more than that you shall assist Ali."

Monte-Cristo, with Haydée on his arm, now went down among the sailors, who stood respectfully aside to allow him to pass.

"How they love you!" murmured Haydée.

"Shall I ever be loved as much as I am feared?" answered Monte-Cristo, sadly, as he watched a boat swiftly lowered and steps secured to the side of the yacht, which the Count first descended bearing Haydée in his arms. He deposited his precious burthen among luxurious cushions, and then himself took the rudder.

Ali and Bertuccio came on board, and then, at a signal from the Count, the six rowers lifted their oars simultaneously, and the boat shot from out the shadow of the yacht.

When they landed, Monte-Cristo again bore Haydée in his arms.

"You can return to the yacht," he said to the sailors, when Bertuccio and Ali stood on the yellow sand behind him. "It is now ten o'clock. At two you can return."

Monte-Cristo walked up the beach; a strange glory illuminated his eyes, and made his face radiant. With the most accurate memory he went directly toward the grottos.

Haydée, curious, because a woman, made all the haste she could. It was not the secret of the grottos that now interested her. She knew them well, and was familiar with all their wonders and splendor. The secret she was eager to learn was that in the soul

of the man she loved. It was there, too, that only a few months before the Count had pressed a husband's kiss on her lips.

The Count divined these thoughts, for he drew her gently on.

"My beloved," he said, "I have tried to merit your love and devotion!"

The subterranean palace, still hidden with so much skill that no profane eye had ever penetrated its mysteries, was ready for its master—looking as if that very morning faithful servants had made preparations for his coming.

Aromatic perfumes made the air sweet, and candelabras, quickly lighted by Bertuccio and Ali, showed all the silky fabrics, delicate tints, and glittering Venetian glass.

Monte-Cristo took Haydée's hand.

"Listen to me, my child," he said. "Ten years ago I arrived here poor and naked, with a heart swelling with anger and despair. I return to-day a different man. I have been an avenger, and you will learn to-day all that I have suffered. Arm yourself with courage, child, for you are to hear that which no human ear has ever heard."

Haydée lay at the feet of the Count with her eyes fixed on his pale face, as he sat thinking of the past. He remembered what he was at the age of twenty-four, happy, gay, and trustful. Labor was a joy and a consolation. He had friends whom he loved and who were faithful to him, as he thought. He had a father whose pride and consolation he was. One day these

friends, in whom he confided, laid a dastardly plot, and wove a net so adroitly and strongly for his ruin that he could not break it. He had demanded justice, and the man who represented the law, in obedience to his own pride and ambition, had trifled with him. Innocent though he was, he was treated like a criminal, and for fourteen years he had been buried alive in an obscure prison, crying to God for pity and mad for revenge.

Then the voice of Monte-Cristo trembled, as he told his story to Haydée.

He told her of the good man—the great philosopher—who had been to him a second father; he told her of his overwhelming joy when through the thick walls he heard a human voice; he told her of the long nights he had spent painfully kneeling, receiving instruction from old Faria, whom he thought to be mad when he first talked of the treasure of Spada.

Then Death laid his mighty hand on Faria, and Monte-Cristo, who had in thought often dwelt on all these things, but who had never before put them into words, shivered as he told Haydée how he had removed the body of Faria from the bag, and substituted himself; and how he had felt when he was hurled through space, and thrown into the sea; and then the resurrection!

The Count's eyes flashed as he told his tale, and how he, searching according to Faria's directions for the opening to the Grotto, was all the time distressed by the thought that he had been deceived.

But no; he found wealth—wealth untold—almost at the moment when he learned that Mercédès, his fiancée, was faithless. He heard, too, that his father had died of hunger, and that Caderousse had not lifted a finger to aid him.

He told Haydée how he had sworn to punish all these criminals, and how he had struck them all down without pity or remorse; and how these men, Villefort, Danglars and Morcerf, lifted their heads to accuse him.

And when he had finished his tale he stood up, and fixing his eyes on Haydée he said:

"Child, you have heard all, I claim you as my judge. What is my sentence?"

And Haydée, extending her arms to him:

"You are great, greater than law, in this, your hour of doubt. God is with you!"

"But God is Mercy."

"First he is Justice."

"I am grateful to you, child," said Monte-Cristo. "Your conscience is quick and clear; your words have dissipated the last clouds that obscured my soul. Yes, God is Justice, and eternity is infinite goodness. I have suffered, I have punished, and now my soul is filled with love. I have chastised men, and now I will aid mankind. The great power with which I have worked still remains in my hands, and I will devote it to the salvation of those who suffer."

Monte-Cristo stretched forth his hands.

"What joy to succor the oppressed! to free those

who are bound in fetters! How many years yet remain to me? I may sow the seed, but who will reap the harvest? Ah!" he said, tenderly pressing his wife to his breast, "if God would give me—"

Haydée's lips parted, as if to tell some tender secret, but at this moment Monte-Cristo was interrupted by a signal, which he alone understood.

It was Ali, warning him of some unexpected event.

"Tell me more," said Haydée.

"Not now; you shall know all my hopes and wishes, but later. Come, child, come!"

Ali was standing at the entrance of the Grotto impatiently awaiting his master.

"What is the matter, Ali?" asked the Count.

Ali pointed toward the rocks that lay between the grotto and the shore, and then made a series of signs which the Count attentively watched.

"Ah!" said Monte-Cristo, "a man is lying on the shore?"

Ali nodded assent.

"Do you know this man?"

Ali signified that he hesitated—that his memory was at fault.

"Is the man injured?"

"Yes."

"Dead?"

"No."

"But insensible. I see, Haydée, God has sent me here, perhaps, to accomplish an act of mercy. He has heard and accepted my oath. A human being, a fellow creature, is suffering. I must go to him."

"And I with you," answered Haydée.

"Dear child!" and a tear came to the eyes of the Count, who, turning to Ali, signified to him to lead the way.

As they turned the corner of the rocks, behind which was concealed the entrance to the Grotto, he saw Bertuccio, who, with a pickaxe, was making a hole in the ground.

"What is Bertuccio doing?" asked Haydée.

"You will know presently, dear child. Have you nearly finished, Bertuccio?"

"Yes, sir; it is all done, and we only wait for your signal."

"Very well, put down your tools and come with me."

The Corsican followed his master, but he retained the pickaxe in his hand.

Suddenly Ali stopped, and Monte-Cristo saw below him, on the shore, an outstretched human body. The face was hidden, but on the black hair was a mass of coagulated blood. Near this man was a black object half covered with sand.

Monte-Cristo ran down the rocks and lifted the man in his arms, bringing him up the rough pathway with ease.

"Ali," he called, "bring me some brandy and smelling salts. Do not lose one minute."

The Nubian started off on a run.

With the assistance of Bertuccio and Haydée, who herself made a pillow of dried seaweed, the Count laid the wounded man in the shade.

"He lives!" cried the Count; "we will save him!"

But suddenly he heard a ferocious exclamation at his side. Bertuccio, pale as death, stammered:

"Look! master, look! Do you not know him?"

Monte-Cristo had not yet seen the man's face. He leaned over him.

"Benedetto!" he exclaimed. "It is Benedetto!"

"Master, move away," cried Bertuccio, in an ungovernable rage: "move aside, that I may crush this viper—that I may kill this assassin!" And brandishing his pickaxe, he let it fall.

It would have penetrated Benedetto's brain had not Monte-Cristo snatched it from him ere it was too late, and throwing it into the sea, he said sternly:

"How long is it, Bertuccio, since you took it upon yourself, in my presence, to judge and punish?"

"Forgive me, master, but don't you remember Benedetto was the man who tortured his foster mother, to compel her to give up her money to him? This man has lived only by thefts and murder."

"I see only a man," said Monte-Cristo.

Bertuccio was conquered.

Ali had by this time returned, and Monte-Cristo began to rub the hands of Benedetto, while Haydée bathed his temples. Then they opened his mouth and poured down his throat a few drops of brandy.

Presently Benedetto sighed deeply, but he did not open his eyes. The wound had been a severe one, but the blood flowing freely had saved his life.

"He will live," said Monte-Cristo.

"It would be much better for other people if he should die!" muttered Bertuccio.

The Count turned to him.

"Wash this wound, Bertuccio," he said.

"I, master?"

"I repeat the order, and if you disobey me, remember our conditions; you will leave me to-night."

"No, no, master; I obey."

While he washed the wound he was livid with rage, but he did his charitable work kindly and deftly.

At a sign from the Count, Ali went down to the shore and brought up the black object they had all noticed.

"An oak box!" said Monte-Cristo; "what can be in it?"

He took from his breast a key of peculiar workmanship, which would open any lock. In an instant the lid was open, and even Monte-Cristo was amazed at what he saw. Gold and bank notes! A fortune!

"He is coming to himself, master. What shall I do now?"

"Will he know you?"

"Oh! not yet, he is dead with sleep. But what is that, master?"

And Bertuccio looked with wonder at the contents of the box. Oh! it was too plain—here was the evidence and result of some new crime!

Meanwhile Monte-Cristo had taken out some of the *rouleaux* of gold and had found a folded paper. He opened it, and this is what it contained:

"My Son:—I am going to see you to-day for the last time. I shall send you this letter just as I leave France. You have forgiven me the crime of your birth, and I am grateful. I shall spend the rest of my life in expiation, and in this final hour I send you, poor martyr, my heart and my blessing."

These lines were signed "H. D."

"Henriette Danglars!" said the Count of Monte-Cristo, with a start. "Poor creature!"

He looked down at Benedetto's dark face, which even in repose had something sinister about it, and to this mysterious being, who had learned to read every line in a face, there came a revelation.

"Benedetto!" he cried, "Benedetto, awake! You have killed your mother!"

The breast of the prostrate wretch heaved convulsively.

He opened his eyes wide and immediately replied.

"Yes, yes—I killed her!"

And he fell back unconscious. Monte-Cristo stood like a white statue of horror. And Bertuccio watched him with a faint smile. What would his master do now in the face of such an avowal? What punishment would he mete out to this man, who had killed Assunta, his mother by adoption, and Madame Danglars, who had given him birth. He waited as did Haydée with hands folded on his breast, ready to accept the sentence whatever it was.

The silence was unbroken except for the voices of

the sailors singing on board the boat, that in obedience to the orders of Monte-Cristo was coming from the yacht.

The Count stepped forward.

"Jacopo!" he called, in a voice so clear and ringing that it reached the boat.

Jacopo stood up and waved his cap as a sign that he heard. Then in the patois of Malla, which Jacopo alone understood, Monte-Cristo gave him an order. Immediately two sailors jumped into the sea and swam swiftly back to the yacht. Astonished and curious Bertuccio and Ali looked on, but Haydée never took her eyes from the face of her dear master, her husband, the Count of Monte-Cristo.

The boat now more slowly came toward the rock on which the group stood, having the sky as their background. Jacopo leaped on shore, and with two of his sailors ran to the Grotto and returned with a quantity of provisions which he put on board the boat.

"Master! Master!" cried Bertuccio.

Monte-Cristo did not notice him.

"Ali," he said, "take this man and lay him in the bottom of the boat."

And as Ali obeyed, Monte-Cristo took the oak box and followed the Nubian with a rapid step and threw the box down by the side of Benedetto. The sailors looked on in silence, astonished at what they could not understand.

Then Monte-Cristo returned to Haydée's side. Ali entered the water up to his waist and laid his hands on

the boat where there were two oars, those of the sailors who had gone back to the Alcyon. Monte-Cristo, extending his arms as if calling upon all Nature to hear him, said sternly:

"Benedetto, thou hast insulted God. Benedetto, thou hast disregarded all laws divine and human. Man cannot be thy judge—I abandon thee to God. Go!"

At this last word, Ali gave one vigorous push to the bark, which floated off on the receding tide.

"Why were you so merciful, Master?" asked Bertuccio, discontentedly.

"I have not been merciful," answered the Count, "I have simply left the decision with God, who will Himself judge if life is not a greater chastisement to this man than death."

And in his tone there was such intense solemnity that every head was bowed as if in prayer. At the same moment, the Alcyon, in obedience to the orders conveyed by the two sailors, came as close to the shore as was safe and sent out another boat.

"Now, Bertuccio and Ali, carry out my orders," said the Count, when he stood with Haydée on the deck of the yacht. He waited.

"Haydée," he said, gently, "the moment has arrived when an absolute separation between the past and the future must take place. The last trace of the secret of Faria is now about to disappear—treasures and grotto will vanish into thin air."

And Haydée saw a column of dark smoke ascend to the sky from the centre of the island of Monte-Cristo.

A terrible explosion shook the air, and the rocks fell over each other in wild confusion. The Grottos were blown up. And Bertuccio and Ali swam back to the yacht.

"My husband! my master!" said Haydeé, laying her head on Monte-Cristo's shoulder, "I thank you for being so good. God will bless the child that is coming to us!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PANDOURS.

SIGNORA VARTELLI, familiarly known as Aurora, was the proprietor in '47 and '48 of a Casino near La Scala, in Milan. This Casino or gambling house was frequented by the officers of the Austrian army, then in garrison in the ancient capital of Lombardy, under the command of Marshal Radetzsky.

Joseph Wesceslas, Comte Radetzsky, was one of those central figures in history which seem to have been created merely to show of what brutal ferocity human beings may be guilty. Under such an officer, it may easily be imagined what the subordinates were.

A conquered people suffer the most bitter martyrdom, but who can estimate the blood and tears that its oppressors have cost Italy, and who can tell how much of the responsibility should rest on the two men called Radetzsky and Haynau? Insolent and belligerent, the officers in the pay of Austria, after having knocked down women and children in the street, after having amused themselves by pricking some unfortunate Italian until he bled with the points of their swords, went to the fair Aurora's salons to repose from their labors.

Aurora Vartelli was one of those Circes who still

exist and who transform men into beasts. Protected by the Austrian police, perhaps by reason of some especial service rendered, the Signora kept open house. The cuisine was unexceptionable, and the wines excellent. After dining well, therefore, the "*Tedeschi*" were in the mood to play cards and handle the dice.

There were no true Italians there; the place was given over entirely to foreigners and to such traitors as forgot their country, as forgot their patriotism, and were ready to sell their country, not for thirty pieces of silver, for the price had augmented in the lapse of centuries, but for places and crosses.

There was great excitement in the salons of the Signora Vartelli on the evening of the 15th and 16th of March, on the stroke of midnight, when we enter them with our readers.

In spite of the efforts of the stately Aurora, who went from group to group, in spite of the appeals of the old Major Bartolomeo Balto, who shared with her the management and the profits of the Casino, the young officers were strangely indifferent to the seductions of the card tables.

"You are sure, Lieutenant Pasky, that there are disturbances in Vienna?"

"Certainly—but how grave they may be I can't say."

"The Emperor will bring the *canaille* to reason, I suppose?"

"Yes, with a few cannon shot. I hear, though, that our august Sovereign has been making some concessions."

"Of what kind?"

"There is serious talk of the abolition of the censor—"

"So that journalists and the newspapers may say what they will? That strikes me as very stupid. I think they had much better be gagged!"

"Then his Imperial Majesty has ordered a convocation of the German States."

"Ha!"

"And also a convocation of the central organizations of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom."

Loud exclamations interrupted the bearer of evil tidings. In vain did he assert that this convocation was not immediate—the whole room was in a state of wild excitement.

"We know what to do," said a tall fellow—Captain Hermann von Keychastein—"we don't care what may be in the mind of His Majesty. We only know that if the Italians lift one finger, we will grind them to powder!"

And as he spoke the burly Captain gave emphasis to his words by crushing in his enormous hand a glass he held.

"Bravo! Bravissimo!" shouted his companions. "We would like something to stir us up. We have had no fun for some time!"

"Speak for yourselves!" growled the Captain.

"Have you had any fun since the 3d of January? Tell us about it."

"I punished one of those insolent rascals yesterday."

"Tell us about it."

The Count de Keychastein, for he was a Count as

well as a Captain, leaned against the mantel as he talked.

"Well, children," he began—his gray moustache sanctioned the familiarity—"you remember what took place on the 3d of January? The Lombards actually believed that they cut off a large source of revenue to our good Sovereign by abstaining from the use of tobacco. You remember our response to this preposterous act. You remember how we sent forth our faithful Croats, who quickly proved to these rebels, by cutting down their women and children, that their master could and would punish them."

"Yes, I remember what I saw in one street myself," said a young officer, a mere lad, "grenadiers cutting their way through the crowd with their naked sabres"

"Excuse me," said the Count, in a stately manner, "I think I was telling this story!"

"A thousand pardons, Captain."

"I know all about it, because I was there," answered the Captain. "The orders had been given for this punishment the evening before, at the house of Comtesse de Sobeyloffen, who pretended to be afraid, and vanished from Milan—"

"Little coward!" said a voice.

The Captain, with a contemptuous glance in the direction whence the voice came, continued, rapidly:

"Well, yesterday I was crossing la Place Fontana about six o'clock in the evening, when I saw one of those cursed Italians or rather two of them, for there was a woman and a boy of sixteen. The woman was rather superb in her deep mourning and lace vail: the

boy was not more than sixteen. They stood on the sidewalk so that I could not pass. I went on exactly as if I had not seen them, and as I weigh a good many pounds you can easily imagine what happened."

And with a gesture the Captain signified that he knocked the woman down.

"I shrugged my shoulders and passed on, but the lad ran after me, and snatching my cigar from my lips threw it in my face. I drew my sword. The woman clung to my arm, and implored mercy for her son. With the handle of my sword, I knocked her hands from my arm. And then I calmly clove the skull of the boy in twain. He fell. The people wanted to mob me, but the police came to my assistance, and I walked off as calmly as ever."

"Was there ever such insolence?" said one.

"And did the boy die?" asked another.

"I really did not ask. The police took him away—he may have been sentenced to-day."

"Antonio Balbini was this morning strangled; his body is now nailed to the wall in one of the prisons" said a grave voice.

Every one turned to look at the speaker.

The man who had spoken, now advanced with a hearty laugh.

"Your way of treating insubordination is an excellent one, Count. I remember one order you gave, not long since, to have two prisoners bathed in brandy before burning them alive. It was really most ingenious. An excellent method when you have to do with those unreasonable creatures who believe in

their country, and who have always big words in their mouths."

The speaker was an Italian about thirty years of age--remarkably handsome. His eyes were black as jet, and flashed fire; but his mouth was gay and smiling, his teeth shining white through his thick moustache. He was called the Marquis d'Aslitta; he had been two months in Milan, having come, it was said, from Naples. He had at once paid his court to the Viceroy, and avoided his compatriots, seeming to take great pleasure in the cruelties of the persecutors. The officers about him looked uncomfortable while he talked, although they feebly joined in the laugh.

"What is the comedy this infernal Italian is playing?" growled Captain Hermann, fixing his eyes on the Marquis, not with the most benevolent expression.

At this moment a great uproar was heard in the street. And from the Square in front of La Scala came shouts of "Vive la Luciola! Vive l'Italie!"

All the officers rushed to the windows.

The Marquis approached Major Bartolomeo.

"To-night," he said, in a low voice, "at the little house near the Porte du Tessen."

CHAPTER XX.

THE QUEEN OF FLOWERS.

WE must explain the uproar which so interested the officers. Thirty years ago, as well as to-day, all Italians were musicians. Every musician was a composer, and all the composers were in search of a libretto which could be passed by the censor of the press. One offended the sovereign because the phrase occurred, "defeats cause victories to be forgotten." Another insulted the army, because the tenor broke a sword on his knee. Another attacked religion, because a statue of the Virgin was overthrown by a miscreant. Maestro Ticellini was at his wits' end. He in vain advised the authors of the libretti submitted to his approval to speak of nothing, for the censor had a microscope which transformed every grain of sand into a rock. The maestro was to write his opera—the divine Luciola, whom all Italy adored, was engaged at La Scala, and the Impressario was the especial friend of Ticellini. Was there ever such a chance! And the maestro, who was already very thin, became more and more emaciated. He tore out his last remaining hair, and was ready to cry with Richard III., "my kingdom, my kingdom!"—for a libretto!

One evening the maestro, weary and heartsick with disappointment, entered his rooms in the Rue de Monte, where he was greeted with a great surprise. The maid servant met him at the door, brandishing a huge roll of paper. She was a good girl, who shared all her master's ambitions. Ticellini did not thank her; he did not even see her; he snatched the roll of paper from her hand, and going to his room, locked himself in and then tore off the ribbon tied around the manuscript, for it was a manuscript. The ribbon, which Ticellini threw aside without even looking at it, was woven of three colors, green, white and red—the colors of Italy. Could anything have been more seditious?

But Ticellini had other and more important things to think of. The manuscript was called "The Queen of Flowers," and bore no signature. It was well written in flowing, graceful rhymes, and was really very pretty. The "Queen of Flowers" was the Rose, she loved the Pink, who, in his turn, adored the wild Marguerite. Ticellini saw it all. The rôle of Marguerite was written expressly for la Luciola, and the Rose must be la Ronita, the first contralto in Italy.

That night, Ticellini, mad with joy, composed the duet of love, the trio of jealousy, and several other things. At dawn he rushed to the Impressario.

"An opera!" he cried; "I have it all—libretto and all!"

As we have signified, the Impressario believed in Ticellini, who rushed to the piano, where he played and sang the cavatinas he had composed.

"I am afraid I can't bring out your opera, my poor friend," said the Impressario.

"And why not?"

"Because I am your friend. The censor distrusts me and he will study the libretto with so much care that we shall be obliged to throw it over."

"He can't do us any harm this time!" cried Ticellini, triumphantly.

The Impressario took the manuscript and examined it; he at once saw its capabilities. He passionately wished to bring out an unpublished opera; he dreamed of the most charming scenic effects, which would display all the Luciola's beauty.

"You see they can't touch us here, Salvani."

"No," answered the Impressario, "but you are sure there is no chorus of poppies—nothing that could be construed into a sort of Marseillaise!"

"No, no! nothing of the kind!"

"I will go at once to the censor," said the Impressario, putting the manuscript in his pocket.

"I will wait for you here; only, for God's sake, my friend, don't delay."

Counsellor Gluchspeil was delighted when he saw Salvani enter his office. He sharpened his red pencil and made ready for his murderous work. There was surely nothing offensive in the title. He turned over the leaves; still he found nothing. Then the censor uttered words of supreme wisdom:

"As I see no reason why this opera should not be brought out, I refer you to my superiors!"

Salvani hastened back to the composer, who was waiting for him more dead than alive.

"Refused!" he exclaimed.

"No, postponed. Patience and hope!"

Two days later the manuscript was returned authorized, and Ticellini thought he should go wild with joy, which was suddenly damped by the fear that the Luciola would not accept her rôle. As he said this in a voice of agony, there came a tap at the door.

"Go away!" cried the Impressario, for the two men were closeted in his cabinet. "Go away! we are busy!"

"What do I care?" asked a fresh young voice, as the door opened and the Luciola appeared.

Ticellini turned crimson and wished that the earth would open and swallow him. The Luciola was amazingly lovely; she wore a robe of crimson satin, fitting her divinely. Her beautiful features were delicately cut, and yet they had an expression of great decision, softened by a peculiar sweetness and clearness in her eyes, to which she owed her name of Luciola.

Whence came she? No one knew. She spoke Italian with perfect purity, and yet she said she was not Italian. Her vivacity and quickness indicated that she was French, and she spoke that language as well as she did Italian. She was credited with numerous romantic adventures, but oddly enough no one could boast of having been distinguished from the crowd of adorers. She rode and she drove, and was often met in masculine costume in the environs of the town, accompanied by a friend who was as frail and delicate in her appearance as the Luciola was robust and auda-

dous. But the one thing that had added greatly to her reputation, was, that having been offended by a Croat officer, she called upon him in her masculine costume and having lashed him with her riding-whip, offered to give him reparation on the field of honor!

And this was the woman on whom Ticellini's fate now depended. A woman whose decisions were not to be anticipated, but whose caprices were laws, now that she was the Queen of La Scala. Her life had been a very quiet one since her sojourn in Milan, and no one could solve the mystery and decide whether she had a lover or not. All presents—and they were showered at her feet—had been pitilessly returned to the donors. And yet vague whispers went about that a certain little door in her park wall was sometimes opened at daybreak by a tall, graceful man, who concealed his features in the folds of his cloak. He had been followed, but vanished like an apparition.

La Luciola appeared, as we have said, on the threshold of the room where the manager and the composer were holding their consultation. They were filled with consternation; the enemy had appeared, before their batteries were prepared.

"Upon my word, gentlemen," said the *cantatrice*, "one would think that my presence was disagreeable to you!"

"Disagreeable!" cried Ticellini, with hands folded in adoration.

"My dear prima donna," said Salvani, in the most gallant way, "you are sent to us by Providence!"

"We were this moment speaking of you," stammered the composer.

The Luciola was greatly amused at the confusion of the good man, and bade him say what he chose.

"It is a favor that I ask—that we ask of you."

The prima donna, to whom no chair had been offered, seated herself on a sofa. She threw aside the broad-brimmed hat she wore and her magnificent hair fell about her shoulders. Her beauty reminded one of Tasso's heroines. Salvani looked at Luciola admiringly, with absolute adoration, and would have liked to have fallen on his knees before her.

"My life, Signora, is in your hands!" he stammered.

"How is that? I am not Marshal Radetzsky. claim no right of life and death over my subjects."

A close observer would have noticed that as this name passed her lips, she frowned slightly.

"We have a great favor to ask," said Salvani.

"That is odd, for I, too, came to ask one at your hands," answered Luciola, laughing; "and perhaps from you, too, Signor Ticellini," she added.

"Speak — I implore — my very life is at your disposal!"

Fortunately the prima donna was not so exacting.

"This is what I came for," she said. "Signor Salvani, I am bored to death at La Scala!"

"Bored to death, in spite of all your triumphs?"

"Those do not content me, I assure you!"

"I do not understand," said the Impressario, anxiously. "You surely do not think of leaving me?"

"Ah! that depends on you, my dear Manager."

"Is it a question of salary?"

"Not in the least. Spare me the suggestion. The truth is, Bellini is a great man; Donizetti is a master for whom I feel the most profound admiration—but—"

"Go on, I implore you."

"But I am deadly tired of singing their cavatinas over and over again—"

Ticellini and Salvani exchanged a look.

"And I mean to break my engagement, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless you can give me a new *rôle* in an opera that has never been published."

There was an exclamation of pleased surprise from the two men, who were charmed at this strange coincidence. But the composer's brow presently clouded. It was plain that there was some young musician whom she wished to befriend. She probably had in her pocket a manuscript for which Salvani would throw over his "Queen of Flowers."

"You do not reply," said Luciola, looking at Salvani.

"I am asking myself if you are quite serious."

"And I must tell you that I think you very uncivil."

"But," cried Ticellini, unable to contain himself, "but the favor we wished to ask of you, was that you would condescend to sing in a new opera."

"Really! That is very strange!"

Luciola's tone was so odd that the composer choked with agony. Yes, in one moment she would take the manuscript from her pocket.

"You will consent, then?" she asked, turning to Salvani.

"Ah!" answered Luciola, in the most natural tone, "I must have something new, that is all I care for. As to the composer, we ought not to be at a loss, when we have Cioberto, Palmarelli and our beloved Ticellini."

The composer turned very pale.

"Then you have no score ready in your pocket?" he gasped

"I am unarmed," answered the prima donna, with a laugh. "I have but one condition to make."

"Go on, Signora."

"In the first place, I am tired of tragedy. I want something light, graceful and pretty; but it is really difficult to explain just what I do want."

"Wait! What would you say to an opera with the title of 'The Queen of Flowers?'"

"It is a charming title, certainly!"

"And the *rôle* for you would be the Marguérite of the fields."

"Delightful!"

Rushing to the piano, Ticellini sang his cavatina. The prima donna listened, and when he had finished, she said:

"I am satisfied; that is the opera I want!"

Salvani was less enthusiastic than the composer, and his great admiration for the artist and the woman did not prevent his feeling a little distrust, for the incident struck him as very singular. She had come to ask for a new *rôle*, and the conditions she asked were precisely

those of the manuscript on which Ticellini founded so many hopes; the manager well knew that it was useless to question the Luciola, but he made up his mind that to favor some protégé—some poet—she had taken this course, after advising her protégé to send the manuscript of the libretto to Ticellini. But there was no harm in this. The censor had passed the libretto, and all the manager had to do was to bring out the opera with as much flourish of trumpets as possible. Ticellini wept for joy as he instructed his orchestra; it would be glory for him and a future. The first representation was finally fixed for the 15th of March.

But we must begin a new chapter here—an historical chapter.

CHAPTER XXI.

PATRIA.

THIRTY years ago Italy did not exist! "She was merely," according to Mellomele's words, "she was merely a geographical expression." Foreign domination weighed heavily upon her, the Bourbons and the Pope crushed under their despotic heel such portions of the peninsula as had preserved a semblance of national independence.

But a people are, after all, not easily crushed, and in those very places where foreign rulers thought they had forever imposed silence, rose from time to time, mad shouts for revenge followed by wild struggles, ending invariably in the triumph of the oppressors and in terrible reprisals on their part.

A Pope—minister of a God of peace and love—looked on at scenes of carnage. A cardinal rode into the city through streets encumbered by dead bodies.

When the successor of St. Peter was too weak, he called on the Austrians for aid. Sometimes France was ready to extend her hand to the oppressed, but the inexorable policy of the government checked this movement of humanity and killed the hopes of thousands of patriots. A man then appeared who resolved to collect all the scattered forces and to direct them

toward one aim. This man was Mazzini. He founded the *Jeune Italie*, that immense society whose device was a branch of cypress and whose motto was *Ora e Sempre* (now and always). Branches were established in Lombardy, Tuscany and in the Papal States, and from all parts of Italy came recruits from the young Italian nobility. The war between the patriots and the tyrants was one to the death. If the oppressors, through treason or cowardice, succeeded in getting into their power some member of the *Jeune Italie*, there were no tortures, moral or physical, to which they did not subject the unfortunate man who was guilty of loving his country. Jacques Rufini, who was given over to the torturers, drew a nail from the hinge of his prison door and plunged it into his heart. But where one died ten sprang up.

On the evening of June 16th, 1844, Emilio Bandura, with seventeen companions, made an attempt to deliver the political prisoners; but among them was one dastardly scoundrel, who betrayed them to overwhelming numbers, by whom they were carried to the very prisons whose doors they hoped to break. Their captivity lasted twenty-three days, and finally they were sentenced to death. The martyrs, calm and dignified, marched to the place of execution singing the patriotic hymn:

> "Chi per la patria muore,
> Vissuto ha assai—!'

(He who dies for his country has lived long enough.) When they reached the square the soldiers halted and loaded their guns. The air was filled with the sobs of the spectators.

"Fire!" shouted the officer in the service of Ferdinand II.

"Vive l'Italie!" answered the Bandura brothers and their companions, as they fell dead.

At Milan the patriots had their first triumph, but this triumph they dearly expiated; however, the example was contagious. It will be remembered that the Americans in the last century began the war of independence by abstaining from tea, the tax on which was an important revenue to the government by which they were oppressed. About the end of December, 1847, a series of questions were printed and distributed among the theatres and clubs. These questions were issued as a means of discovering the amount received by Austria from lotteries and tobacco. To impoverish the Austrian treasury it was decided that tobacco and lotteries should be relinquished. On the 2d of January no one smoked with the exception of a few persons who were ignorant of the decision, and those who were connected with the police; all these were hissed and hooted, and were compelled to throw away their cigars. This day, says an historian, stands out by itself in the history of the thirty-five years of Austrian domination. The police were quiet all through the day, but at night soldiers appeared and bade them smoke as much as they pleased, for they would be protected.

About two o'clock a group of Hungarians and Croats took possession of the Rue Corso de Servi. Tipsy, and with cigars in their mouth, they cut and slashed with their naked swords, caring not whom they killed or injured. It was to these brutal acts that Captain

Hermann had alluded in the Casino. This slaughter had been premeditated, for the police had bidden the Hospitals see that their litters were in readiness. In vain did the Mayor, Gabriel Casati, protest to the Marshal, who simply replied that he should not attempt to restrain his soldiers, who had been insulted.

This was the last drop in the brimming vase. The resistance of the people assumed a new character; they breathed only vengeance and almost forgot deliverance. The Italian prelates themselves took sides with their compatriots, and one even had the courage to reproach the Viceroy for this crime of wholesale assassination. But to all these indignant protests the Emperor of Austria simply replied by a proclamation

"In the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom," he said, "there is a faction that threatens disturbance of social order and repose. I rely on the fidelity and experience of my troops."

The so-called faction now became the entire people, ready to seize every opportunity of revenge and of restoring to liberty their suffering country. The Austrian soldiery became daily more arrogant and brutal. But nothing could have been more admirable than the patience of these noble patriots, who were only awaiting the auspicious moment. One morning the students accompanied to the cemetery the body of one of their comrades. They were marching in orderly silence, when two Austrian officers, with cigars in their mouths, broke into the funeral procession, insulting the students and the priests, and puffing the smoke of their cigars into their faces. Then the crowd lost their self-control.

they turned on the officers and threatened them with death. The Austrians were frightened and shouted for assistance. Soldiers rushed to their aid from all quarters and the butchery began. The University was closed the next day and the students exiled from the city. But the people did not yet submit. The Rue de Servi was known by them as the *Corso Scelarato* (the street of crime), and abandoning it entirely the people united near the *Porte de Rome.* This street, formerly so deserted, was now nightly crowded by citizens who wore on the arm or the hat, or in the button-hole, the colors of Italy, red, green and white. This looked like a revolution. The ladies of Milan, dressed in mourning, went about soliciting contributions in aid of the dead and wounded; everywhere they were received with sympathy and respect. The police felt themselves to be powerless, for sometimes those in authority, it matters not how strong they are, feel a premonition of defeat.

Radetzsky fortified the citadel, and night and day the streets were patrolled by armed men. Suddenly a cry of liberty came over the Alps. Paris had driven out the Orleans dynasty. Insurrection was in the air. And it was on the evening of the 15th of March, when the curtain rose on the new opera of "La Reine des Fleurs," that the revolution, triumphant at Vienna, wore from the Emperor a Constitution—the liberty of the press—and the organization of the National Guard. This was not known in Milan, and yet there was a strange electricity in the air. The explosion was near. Who would touch the match to the powder?

CHAPTER XXII.

GREEN, WHITE AND RED.—THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO, HIS WIFE AND SON.

AN Emperor who feels his crown tremble on his brow, a conqueror who sees his troops march to battle, a player who throws his last louis on the green table, are all calmnesss itself, compared to a composer who hears an orchestra play the first notes of his overture.

Oddly enough, and the manager was most agreeably surprised, the house was packed. He had feared lest amid the political agitation the prima donna would play to comparatively empty benches. Up to the previous evening, there had been few applications for tickets. But the morning of the representation a singular person, a Nubian, draped in a white bournous, had knocked at the door of the manager's room.

"What can I do for you?" said Salvani, courteously.

The Nubian, with a gesture, signified that he wanted the tickets that he saw on the desk.

"Ah! I see. Your master wants a box?"

The Nubian smiled so broadly that the manager could have counted every tooth in his head, had he not been otherwise employed.

Without replying, the Nubian laid his large hand on the package.

"Ah! two boxes? Your master wants two boxes?"

The negro shook his head.

"Three, then?"

Again the same negative shake of the head.

"But what do you want? Are you dumb?"

The Nubian assented, and at the same time drew out a huge bundle of bank notes from the folds of his bournous. These notes he laid on the desk by the side of the tickets, with an air of triumph.

"But I don't understand! You don't mean that you want all those tickets?"

The Nubian nodded yes, at this question, with so much energy, that there was no possible room for doubt.

Salvani took up the tickets. There were seven front boxes.

The Nubian nodded as they were counted at fifty livres each. Eighteen loges in the next row at thirty-six livres, and all the fourth row, some thirty loges, at twenty-five livres.

The negro displayed the bank notes, and the manager made his estimate.

"Seven hundred and ninety-two livres—"

The Nubian seemed to think that he was doubted, and again plunging his hand among the folds of his bournous, it reappeared with another bundle of crisp and rustling bank notes.

The manager went on with his calculation. "Total, two thousand eight hundred and forty-eight livres."

The Nubian, with the air of an agent who knows the value of money, counted down three thousand livres.

"But I have not another box!"

The Nubian laughed. Then, touching the manager's shoulder, he made a sign that he should follow him.

"Where do you wish to go?" asked the manager. "That door leads to the stage!"

But the Nubian, who seemed to know his way well, though Salvani did not remember ever having seen him in the theatre, walked directly to the front of the stage, and pointed to the orchestra stalls and the pit.

"You wish to buy the whole house?"

"Yes."

"Five hundred and seventeen places! Well! it is not my affair!"

"Yes," nodded the dusky stranger, and when this transaction was concluded, the Viceroy himself could not have obtained from Salvani a seat in the most obscure corner of the theatre.

Ticellini entered, and Salvani, laying aside his usual discretion, could not resist telling the strange tale to the Maestro, who heard it with incredulity, but the sight of the bank notes convinced him only to throw the poor man into agonies of despair.

"I see it all!" he cried, "it is an enemy, a rival. Groberto has packed the house, and I am to be hissed!"

The manager laughed this idea to scorn. Groberto

would not have sacrificed all this money even to witness his rival's discomfiture.

"Would you spend as much money to see Groberto hissed?" asked Salvani, but the composer was not soothed. Before the rising of the curtain, through the usual hole he watched the arrival of the audience.

It was a magnificent sight. Never had La Scala been more brilliantly filled, and by the representatives of the oldest Milanese families. For the first time for years the ladies of the nobility, who had protested against the occupation of their land by foreigners by wearing black, now appeared in magnificent costumes. only it seemed to Ticellini that they were singularly alike. Some were dressed in green satin, the color o. the grass in the meadows, and wore green leaves in their hair.

Others wore red velvet and roses or dahlias in their black hair. Others again wore white and diadems of marguerites. Was this a delicate compliment to the composer of the opera? Enthusiastic as he was, he could not quite credit this, and he was very uncomfortable. Red, white and green were the colors of the National flag, which Italians had long been forbidden to unfurl, and the maestro realized that the volcano was seething. Should he warn the manager? No—and it was with tears in his eyes that he murmured the first two lines of the National hymn:

> "Chi per la patria muore,
> Vissuto ha assai—!"

The door of a *loge*, the one nearest the stage,

opened, and three persons entered—a man, a woman and a child.

The man was tall, with dark, curling hair, a colorless skin, and intense eyes. He was dressed with faultless elegance. He came to the front of the box and looked around the house. He did not seem to be looking for any one, or seem to recognize any one, and yet, when he took his seat his eyes flashed with joy and triumph.

The lady realized the wildest dreams of an artist, not only in the regularity of her features, but in the expression, which reminded one of Perugino's Virgins. Her costume added to the strange conviction that she was of a superior race. A long tunic of rich purple was drawn in to her figure by a scarf of white silk, so heavy and rich that the ends fell in folds that looked as if hewn from marble. On her head she wore a lace mantilla, fastened just above her eyebrows by an emerald of incredible size and value. Between this singular pair sat the child, about nine years old, worthy of both mother and father. He was in black velvet.

The whole house was so impressed by this perfection of human beauty that loud applause broke out. Several Austrian officers now walked in and took their seats in the orchestra. Radetzsky's aids occupied the *loge* facing the unknown. They were talking together about the singular coincidence of these National colors. Presently these officers rose from their seats, and one of them sent for Signor Salvani. And, as the trembling impressario promptly obeyed the summons with despair in his heart, the aide-de-camp, with his back to the public, overwhelmed him with reproaches

"But will your Excellency look once more?"

The stranger in the opposite box had thrown around his wife's shoulders a scarf of cerulean blue.

As if this act had been a signal, all the women in the house showed some bit of color—a cloak or a scarf, or a brilliant fan. And when the aide-de-camp turned to look once more at the house, he was thunderstruck. Was he mad? he asked himself. Was he so perpetually haunted by the spectre of the Italian Revolution that he was losing his mind, or his eyesight?

"Very good, sir!" he said to the manager. "Very good, but to-morrow we will see to this!"

The manager cared at that moment very little for to-morrow—his receipts for that evening were safe, at all events, and he made a sign to the leader of the orchestra to begin the overture.

Naturally enough, at the first sound thunders of applause filled the vast auditorium of La Scala. It is true that the stranger, who had been watching the Radetzsky *loge*, had given the signal.

And Ticellini murmured: "Ah! this public is a discriminating one. They have heard only a half dozen bars, and just listen to their applause!" He hastened to Lucia's dressing-room, to see that all was right there. The door of the dressing-room was open, and the prima donna looked so beautiful in her Marguérite costume that the Maestro could not speak for ecstasy.

"Shall I succeed?" she asked, with a smile.

A gentleman advanced at this moment. He was well known in Milan, but all good Italians regarded

him with distrust, for he was an assiduous courtier of the Viceroy. He was under the protection of the Austrians, but everybody else looked on him as a traitor and a renegade, and yet many persons wondered that a traitor could be so handsome.

"I am sure of your success, Signor Ticellini," said this gentleman — the Marquis d'Aslitta — as he advanced.

"Ah! thank you. Your Excellency is too kind."

"No, I only speak the simple truth. Your success will be far beyond your hopes."

Some one called the Maestro, who hurried away.

Luciola and Aslitta were alone for a moment.

"Giorgio," said Luciola, extending her hand to the Marquis, "the hour has come."

The Marquis gave his hand to the prima donna.

"Dearest," he said, "you are perhaps about to risk your liberty, even your life, for my country. God be with you!"

Luciola laid her fair head on his breast.

"You love me, Giorgio?"

"I love you as I love God, as I love my country."

"Now I must go: rely on me—"

But Giorgio detained her for one more embrace.

"You have forgotten nothing?" he asked.

"Nothing," she replied.

"And remember, no imprudence; wait for the signal. Courage!"

"Hope!" answered Luciola, with another kiss.

At this moment a hand was laid on the shoulder of the Marquis d'Aslitta, and a coarse, cruel voice said:

"You make a mistake in leaving your door open."

D'Aslitta turned. The man who stood before him was strange and repulsive in appearance. Tall and slender, with hair of a reddish brown, the Comte San Pietro had across his brow and over one eyelid, down to the ear, a large scar, which was something terrible to look upon.

A sabre cut, he called it, and the muscles of the mouth had been injured also, which gave a look to the whole face as if a diabolical smile were upon it.

D'Aslitta was terribly pale—all the blood in his body seemed to have gone back to his heart. Was it fear, or was it merely the touch of this man's hand on his shoulder.

Luciola stepped between them.

"Sir," she said quickly, to San Pietro, "may I ask by what right you are here?"

The lips and the scar seemed to sneer.

"And what should prevent me from being here?" he asked.

"I command you to leave this room," said the prima donna, "and without delay."

"Monsieur d'Aslitta requires an interpreter, it seems."

D'Aslitta made one step forward with flashing eyes, but he controlled himself.

"We won't quarrel," said San Pietro. "La Luciola surely can be admired by two gentlemen at a time."

D'Aslitta looked him in the face for a moment, and then said quietly:

"Have you a box to night?"

"I am sorry to say I havn't. I sent to the theatre to-day and that rascal, Salvani, replied that he had not one at his disposal."

"Then, perhaps, you will do me the honor to take a seat in mine."

"Ah! you have been more highly favored than I."

"Say, rather, that I took my precautions earlier."

The director appeared.

"Signora," he added, "you are wanted," and Luciola, who was still as pale as death, turned to the two gentlemen.

"You must applaud me well," she said, with a faint smile, as she moved away.

"Monsieur d'Aslitta," said San Pietro, as the echo of her footsteps died away; "Monsieur d'Aslitta, I suppose you know that I mean to kill you?"

"Indeed?" asked the Marquis, stopping short on his way down the corridor, "and may I ask why you are seized with this sudden passion for murder?"

"Because," hissed San Pietro, through his close shut teeth, "because you love Luciola!"

"And cannot one love when one chooses?" asked the Marquis.

"Because the Luciola loves you, then!"

"Please do not imagine that I am fop enough to accept this statement as a truth."

"Take care, d'Aslitta, I have seen!"

"Ah! you have seen; and what then?"

San Pietro leaned toward the Marquis with his face contracted with anger and hate.

"What then?" he repeated. "Are there not in the

Citadel of Milan, cells where Italian patriots may be incarcerated until their limbs are broken on the wheel, and they reveal the names of their fellow conspirators?"

Aslitta threw open the door that led from the stage into the auditorium.

"There are also in Milan, let me tell you, Monsieur San Pietro, quiet corners where Italians who sell their country to foreigners are shot like dogs."

And with a bow he stepped aside to allow San Pietro to precede him.

Who was this San Pietro? Was he a spy of Radetzsky's? Whence came he? And his title? No one could answer these questions fully. He was rich, immensely rich, and had been for two months pursuing Luciola, who hardly seemed to notice him.

San Pietro had made up his mind that the infamy of the Marquis, who pretended to have sold himself to the enemies of his country, was but feigned; but in vain had he pursued his investigations and listened to every word that d'Aslitta uttered, when he made his court to the oppressors of his native land. San Pietro's instinct was quick, but he could not find the proof for which he would have paid a high price.

D'Aslitta had now betrayed himself by treating San Pietro as a renegade, and had virtually admitted himself to be a patriot and a conspirator.

San Pietro smiled. He could bring down Luciola's pride, when she knew her lover to be in the power of Radetzsky's tools.

San Pietro entered the *loge* of the marshal's aide-de-camp.

When Luciola appeared on the stage, she was greeted with thunders of applause, for these unhappy people had their instincts, they not only loved in her the incomparable songstress, but they looked upon her as representing the Angel of their Country.

"Monseigneur," said San Pietro, in the ear of the aide-de-camp. "I wish to denounce a traitor!"

"Another?" answered the Austrian, with a faint smile in which there was more than a shadow of contempt.

San Pietro bit his lip.

"My zeal for His Imperial Majesty is displeasing to your excellency?"

"Not at all, but I wish you would wait until after this *duo*."

The somewhat commonplace melody of Ticellini was now being sung by Luciola, and her magnificent voice and method gave it another meaning. The whole house was breathless, and yet every one had eyes to see that the prima donna turned toward the *loge* where sat the unknown, the lady, and the child, with a look of passionate entreaty.

The stranger had retired to the back of his *loge*, and stood with his eyes riveted on the one opposite. It seemed, by the flash of his eye, as if he heard the words spoken there.

The *duo* finished amid great applause.

"Monseigneur," said San Pietro, "I have proof that the Marquis d'Aslitta is a traitor, and that he conspires with the Italians."

"Good Heavens, sir, can't you wait until to-morrow to talk business?"

"I must remind you, Monseigneur, that 'to-morrow' is often too late."

"Well! What is it?"

"The Marquis d'Aslitta should be arrested at once, and when in the citadel he should be made to speak."

"This Luciola is simply divine," said the aide-de-camp. "We must have her in Vienna at any cost. Excuse me, sir, but I really think we had best forget these conspirators for one evening. Will you undertake this commission?"

"Which commission?"

"Ah! you don't understand. I should like you to propose an engagement to the Luciola."

"If you sign an order to arrest the Marquis d'Aslitta, I promise you there shall be no difficulty about the engagement."

"Ah! what possible connection can there be between these two events?" asked the aide-de-camp, as he turned toward San Pietro.

"Simply that she loves him!" answered the Italian in a voice so low that it was nearly lost in the black beard that concealed the lower part of his face.

"Zounds! you have decided me. It is a crime of State," said the Austrian, laughing. "The fair Luciola has repelled the homage of our most brilliant officers, and yet smiles on this scoundrelly Neapolitan."

"Then, sir—"

"I give you *carte blanche*. There is one condition, however."

"Name it."

"That the arrest shall not take place until after the opera is over. I don't wish to have my amusement sacrificed, as perhaps it might be, if the despair of Luciola should compromise her voice."

"The Marquis may take it into his head to defend himself. I must have very explicit orders."

The aide-de-camp tore a leaf from his note book and wrote a few words.

San Pietro took it with mingled emotions. Did he love Luciola? Possibly, and yet he felt more terror than joy in her presence. He was all the time haunted by the resemblance she bore to some one.

His memory was not very accurate, for at one time in his life, probably when he received that terrible wound which so disfigured him, he had been for months out of his head, and more dead than alive.

But to return to the *loge* of the Viceroy. San Pietro bowed profoundly, and turned to leave the *loge*. Until that moment he had looked at the house. He saw, just in front of him, the pale man, the lady and the child. This time the vail over the Past was lifted, and instinctively he covered his face with his hands as if afraid of being recognized by this man "But no," he said to himself, "no one can possibly know my former name!"

The first act was finished, and he said to one of the officers: "Do you know that person opposite?"

"Not personally. He arrived here this morning from Italy, bringing with him the best of letters. His fortune is gigantic; he is an Indian nabob, it is said."

"And his name?"

"The Count of Monte-Cristo. That is his Wife. She is a Greek—is she not exquisite? That boy is their Son. Now I have told you all I know."

"Thanks!" muttered San Pietro, "it is quite enough. Yes, it is he!" he thought, "and I swear he shall not escape my vengeance this time. I shall strike him through his Son!"

Then turning to the Austrian officer again, he said:

"This name of Monte-Cristo is Italian. What are his political opinions? Are they known?"

"You are suspicious, Monsieur de San Pietro, and with reason. But I can assure you that the Count of Monte-Cristo sent his card by a superb looking Nubian to-day, to Marshal Radetzsky, and stated that he would call on him in three days."

"Ah!" said San Pietro, quietly, but he was none the less astonished at the idea of Monte-Cristo paying his respects to the executioner, and he began to reflect profoundly over this singular step.

The opera was going on swimmingly. Just at the beginning of the third act an orderly came from the Marshal, who desired that his aids should go to him at once. Slaves to discipline, though Luciola had just begun a trio, they rose and left the *loge*.

The prima donna must have surpassed herself, for as the young officers left the *loge*, a wild uproar of applause filled the air.

There was a strange suspense, moreover, evident in the movements and attitudes of the people.

In Ticellini's opera there was one most innocent

scene. The Rose, the haughty Queen of Flowers, vanquished by the innocence and purity of the Marguerite, was united to the Pink in a lovely bower of flowering vines. This was very simple; but of what color was the Pink? Red. And the Marguerite? White, of course. And the foliage? Green. There they were, Red, White and Green, the colors of Italy, the colors of Liberty.

Monte-Cristo rose in his box and extended his hand, and the whole house, with the exception of the few Austrians who were there, rose and applauded and shouted, "Vive l'Italie! Vive the National Flag!" and one powerful voice, ringing like a clarion call, uttered the National watchword, "*Fuori i barbari!*"—"Out with the foreigners!"

Ah! poor Ticellini, they cared little for your music!

Tearing the red scarf from the Pink, and seizing a green palm, la Luciola came to the footlights and in her magnificent voice sang the National Hymn.

The students leaped upon the stage in enthusiasm, while Salvani nearly wept, and gesticulated vehemently

"You will ruin me!" he cried, "you will ruin me!"

But Ticellini, carried away by his enthusiasm, threw his wig in the air, and shouted:

"Vive l'Italie!"

The Luciola was dragged home in her carriage by the students, and this was the noise heard in the Casino of the Signora Vartelli.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AUSTRIAN RULE.—EDMOND DANTES.

THE Austrian officers, Major Hermann at their head, had rushed to the window, and could believe neither their ears nor their eyes, for they saw a populace thoroughly aroused, and they heard repeated by a thousand voices:

"Vive la Luciola! Vive l'Italie!"

These Austrians were quite ready to shout, "Vive la Luciola!" but what had Italy to do with it, and was there an Italy?

The street became more and more densely packed, and the carriage of the prima donna stopped just under the windows of the Casino.

In the carriage sat two women, one magnificently beautiful, the other fair, pale, small and pretty, a little frightened, moreover, but doing her best to look at ease.

Suddenly, Hermann cried, with a brutal oath:

"Gentlemen, let us drive back this *canaille*, who insult and defy us!"

"Good! Very good!"

"With our pistols in our hands! This fair termagant shall sleep in the citadel to-night!"

D'Aslitta heard these words, and rushing to Hermann, he cried, as he caught him by the throat:

"If you touch a hair of her head, you are a dead man!"

Having thrown Hermann back against the wall, the Marquis now rushed through the door, followed by the astonished officers. But knowing as he did certain secret passages in the Casino, the Marquis easily made his escape.

Our readers have readily guessed that the Marquis had been playing a most hazardous part for two months and more. Devoted to his country, he had come from Naples to Milan, knowing that in Lombardy the people were beginning to lose patience. It was at Naples that he had met Luciola. These two ardent natures, exalted and impassioned, comprehended each other instantly—and they loved. The artist gave herself, soul and body, to the great cause of which her lover was the chevalier, who made her the companion and confidante of all his hatreds and his hopes, and she said to him:

"Friend, I will follow you, even unto death!"

She kept her word, and when D'Aslitta said to her that the hour had come to act, she replied:

"I am ready!"

It was Luciola's little blonde companion who had written the libretto, and it was D'Aslitta who had sent it to the composer, who, with the manager, had so innocently received it. And the person who took all the seats in La Scala? It is hardly necessary to name him. It was the man who had placed all his power, all his ability, all his energy at the service of the

oppressed. It was Edmond Dantes, fulfilling the oath he had taken at the solemn moment when Haydée told him of her maternity. He was to see Luciola for the first time at La Scala that night, and she saluted him on coming on the stage as the defender of her country. But was this really all she knew of him? Her heart beat more rapidly than usual as she looked at him, but was it with gratitude, fear, or affection? She had turned pale when she saw him rise and give his looked-for signal. She had boldly fulfilled what she had undertaken, and D'Aslitta for the first time seemed to realize the danger she was in. Yes—the miserable oppressors would not hesitate to strike at this woman· they would shut her up in one of their terrible prisons. It might even come to pass that they would subject her to the torture to compel her to betray the secrets of the conspiracy. But he would save her. His hand was on the street door, when strong arms pinioned him and choked him. He was overpowered and thrown upon the floor. Then a voice, only too well known to him, said:

"You have your orders! Remember, that you will answer for this man with your life!"

D'Aslitta was lifted into a carriage, after being gagged and bound, hearing all the time the cheers that greeted Luciola, the Goddess of Independence. These acclamations were possibly the signals for her captivity, possibly for her death!

He felt a cold touch on his forehead. It was a pistol, and one of the policemen said:

"If you move, Monsieur le Marquis, I will blow out your brains!"

A man dies a thousand deaths at such moments when he has in his soul but two passions: to find himself powerless to save his country, and powerless to defend the woman he loves.

He was half tempted to provoke the discharge of the pistol; but after all life was much, and his was a nature that is not long cast down.

He had the courage to remain perfectly motionless, while the carriage rolled on. Suddenly it stopped, and a few minutes later the doors of a dungeon closed on the gallant D'Aslitta.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FALLING MASKS.

MAJOR HERMANN, followed by his officers, rushed into the street. As soon as they appeared, as soon as the hated uniform was seen, shouts of anger and hatred rent the air.

These Austrians, with a sabre in one hand and a pistol in the other, stood still for a moment as if waiting to decide on which of all this crowd their vengeance should first fall.

The crowd did not wait to be attacked, but a number of young men rushed forward to surround the Austrians. This was the height of imprudence, for they had no arms and carried in their hands only the green branches, the emblem of their resistance.

A pistol shot was heard. It was fired by San Pietro, who thus gave the signal for the massacre, for what else could it be, this struggle between the unarmed victims and their oppressors.

The students now saw that their enthusiasm had exposed the Luciola to great danger, and they threw themselves in front of her carriage.

The prima donna started to her feet. Where was D'Aslitta? She knew him to be so brave and so devoted to her that he would be at her side presently

and if he did not come, it was because he had been killed. Who could say that the pistol shot she had heard had not passed through his heart!

She tried to spring from the carriage, that she might learn the truth, but her companion stopped her with shrieks of fear.

San Pietro, in the meantime, had cut a path through the crowd with his sabre, and Luciola suddenly saw before her his sinister face.

The Italians were surrounded, Luciola was lost. In vain did the students try to make a rampart of their bodies.

"Luciola!" cried San Pietro, "do you think now that you can escape me?"

She uttered but one word in reply, that word was "Coward!" She waited with folded arms, but in one of her hands she held a dagger.

Suddenly a voice, clear and ringing as a bugle call, cried out:

"Benedetto, the convict; take care! The patience of God Almighty will not last forever."

And as this man, who was called San Pietro—this man who was rolling in wealth, and who was the favorite of Radetzsky—as he heard these appalling words he turned with a shudder, and saw before him the man he had recognized in the theatre, threatening him with outstretched arm.

San Pietro, the assassin, the parricide, tore a pistol from his breast and levelled it at the Count of Monte-Cristo. He fired, but Monte-Cristo was unharmed.

At the same moment two horses plunged through

the crowd. With marvellous rapidity they were harnessed to the carriage. Ali, the Nubian, leaped on the back of one, and with a long whip lashed the horses until they were off at a full gallop. Balls whistled around Ali's head, but he did not fall.

A frightful imprecation came from San Pietro's lips. He rushed at the Count of Monte-Cristo, who was alone and unprotected.

Some of the Austrian officers wished to follow, but San Pietro shouted back: "Leave this man to me!" The officers stopped short and became mere spectators, but interested ones.

Monte-Cristo calmly watched the approach of San Pietro, who reached his side and was about to fire, when Monte-Cristo calmly extended his hand and grasped the wrist of the scoundrel and forced him down upon his knees. Taking the pistol, he held it to San Pietro's forehead, while he said:

"You, who are the allies and protectors of this man, should know who and what he, whom you call the Comte de San Pietro, really is. This man, who has been the companion of your chief, is an escaped convict from Toulon, and he murdered his mother."

There was a low exclamation of horror. Monte-Cristo tossed the murderer's pistol away, and pushed San Pietro from him, then calmly walked through the crowd and disappeared.

San Pietro lifted himself with difficulty from the pavement, where he had fallen, and cried out, hoarsely.

"That man lies! He is a spy, an enemy of Austria.

You soldiers will answer for him to the Marshal Radetzsky."

These words aroused the soldiers, and some thirty of them went in pursuit of Monte-Cristo. But just as they overtook him, it seemed to them that the wall opened before him. He disappeared.

This wall belonged to the Casino. And Pietro, followed by the furious Croats, rushed into the Casino. Major Bartolomeo stood in the doorway.

"Scoundrel!" he cried, "you have betrayed me!"

"I," stammered the Major.

"Yes," repeated San Pietro, in his ear, "and I know you. You are Cavalcanti, who acted as my father. And you shall perish as you deserve!"

And, turning to the soldiers he said:

"Arrest this man! I bid you do so in the name of the Viceroy."

CHAPTER XXV.

PATRIOTISM.

THE carriage, driven by Ali, rolled through the solitary streets of Milan with dizzy rapidity.

The prima donna, who had shown so much courage, was now totally overcome, and laid her head on her friend's shoulder.

Milla said softly:

"Do not lose heart, dearest, all will yet be well. Have courage."

"I am not a coward, Milla, but you ought to know that if I seemed so courageous it was because I felt that a preserver was near—but the one who came was not he whom I expected. Ah! have they killed him?"

"No. No, dearest. Remember that he is involved in a tangled conspiracy: many things may have detained him."

Luciola shook her head.

"'Aslitta would not be detained if I needed him. And, Milla, if these men injure him, I will be avenged."

The carriage stopped, and Ali opened the door.

Before they knew where they were, the two ladies found themselves in a vast salon hung with black velvet bordered with gold. A man with gray hair—it was Bertuccio—came forward.

"Signora," he said, "banish all fear. You are among friends." And drawing a portière, he motioned to the friends to pass into the next room.

Luciola uttered a cry of charmed surprise, for the room they entered realized one of the dreams that haunt the imagination of those who read the Arabian Nights. It was like an entrance into a blue world. The walls disappeared under hangings of soft rich silk. The furniture of some odorous wood, was of the same restful hue, while the carpet was white. The crystal globes looked like masses of ice of the faintest blue.

There was one point of brilliant color amid all this clearness; and this was a woman dressed in red, who rose to meet her guests. Haydée's beauty—for it was she—the wife of Monte-Cristo—was more wonderful than ever, and one involuntarily thought of a salamander and the blue flames of oak logs.

She came forward with extended hands.

"I have been waiting for you, sister," she said, as she embraced Luciola, with tender warmth.

Accustomed as was the cantatrice to luxury and splendor, there was something about this apartment she had never before seen, evidences, so to speak, of superhuman taste.

Haydée drew Luciola to the sofa by her side.

"I know," she said, "how anxious you must be, but fear nothing; he says all will be well."

Luciola understood the emphasis on the "he," and replied:

"Perhaps you know, Madame, that in Milan there is one great-hearted man who is devoted to the cause

of Italian Independence. He it was who desired that this opera to-night should be the signal—"

"You mean the Marquis d'Aslitta?" said Haydée.

"You know him, then? Forgive me, Madame, if I tell you a long story. I have suffered much."

She hesitated, and Haydée took her hand tenderly.

"Speak freely, sister," she whispered.

"I am not Italian, I am French. My youth was spent in Paris, among falsehood and deceit. I saw around me men who were attracted by my large fortune. I believed in nothing, and in no one. She whom I called mother—I shall not tell you her name—she was no happier than I, but she was more frivolous, and sought consolation where she found only further humiliation. My father, absorbed in business, in financial operations, thought of little else. I pined for freedom—it seemed to me that I was stifling."

Milla placed her hand on Luciola's shoulder.

"Yes," said the prima donna, "your friendship was everything to me then, as now. One day a terrible catastrophe fell upon my family. I felt at once that every tie that connected me with these people about me was broken, and I fled. And, Madame, I am not twenty-six, and yet I believe neither in virtue nor in love!"

And the tears came to the singer's beautiful eyes.

Haydée murmured:

"Poor child! How you must have suffered!"

"It was torture such as none can conceive who has not experienced it. Art alone enabled me to live. One day, after I went upon the stage and began to

live, I heard a number of men discussing the conduct of certain madmen who, at the risk of their lives, had landed on the Neapolitan territory to assist their brothers in throwing off the chains of slavery. I listened—can it be true, I thought, that any men can exist who are thus unselfish? I became so enthusiastic that I started off in the night, with this dear Milla who looks so timid."

"Where thou goest, I go!" said Milla, quietly.

"We hardly knew where we were going, for the man we had hired as guide had fled and left us, and all at once we heard a great noise. We galloped toward it and by the faint moonlight we saw several men defending themselves against a large body of adversaries. I saw one who was standing on a rock stagger and fall. I leaped from my horse, for it seemed to me that he was something to me, and ran to the spot where I had seen him fall. He had rolled down a precipice How I rescued him I know not. I think sometimes superhuman strength is given us. Milla assisted me."

"And who was this man?" asked Haydée

"Can you not guess? and yet, you a woman! His name was Giorgio D'Aslitta, the noblest and most courageous of men. You smile, because you think of him whose name you bear."

"The Count of Monte-Cristo is good!" said Haydée.

"But D'Aslitta!" And Luciola frowned lightly "But I will not argue," she said, in a moment "but Monte-Cristo is a glorious creature—D'Aslitta says so!"

Haydée smiled.

"Do you know what his first words were when he opened his eyes after his fall? They were:

"'Qui meure pour la patrie,
A assez vecu.'"

"When I heard him repeat them, it was a revelation to me. Up to that moment I had supposed that a man's thoughts were all vile, or at the best, narrow. And I imagine that the Count of Monte-Cristo was a similar revelation to you, for we women are instruments, which remain mute until a beloved hand touches the strings."

"I thank you in the name of Humanity, Eugénie Danglars!" said a voice.

Monte-Cristo entered the room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LUCIOLA.

MONTE-CRISTO was not alone. With him was a boy, a little child, well-proportioned for his years, with hair black as his father's, and blue eyes like his mother's.

Luciola extended her arms, crying: "The darling!" Then, looking at the Count of Monte-Cristo, she asked herself if he, knowing her name, would permit her to embrace the boy. But the Count gently pushed his son toward the prima donna, who pressed a kiss on his glossy hair.

"You recognized me, then?" she asked, in rather an unsteady voice.

"I never forget a face!" answered the Count. "Besides, I have known where you were and what you were doing ever since you left France. The name you bear has made me your debtor."

"Your debtor! Have you forgotten?"

"There are secrets that you will never learn, my child—it is not for me to reveal to you a terrible Past. But when I say that I have a debt to pay you, I mean simply that I am the instrument chosen by God to punish the guilty!"

"You speak of my mother, of my father?" she asked, timidly.

"Yes, my child, I speak of them."

"Then I beg of you to tell me something; my father is living, but my mother—"

She hesitated, and Monte-Cristo understood her and bade Haydée take the child away.

"You know that your father is living?" he asked.

"Yes, in Germany; I learned the fact by accident. But my poor mother—ever since I left her I have wondered if I was not wrong in doing so. What has become of her? She left Paris, but I could never trace her."

Monte-Cristo did not speak for a moment, then he took her hand.

"Your mother is living," he said, sadly, "but who can say that you will ever see her again?"

"She lives! Ah! thank you. In former days our lives were much apart, when we lived under the same roof, but I know perfectly well that I did not do my duty as I should have done."

"Listen to me, my child, and prepare for a great shock. Did you recognize the man who is known as San Pietro?"

"Recognize him, no; but I felt the most terrible antipathy to this miscreant, who merits the contempt of every honest man!"

"It is true, he is greatly changed by that scar, but can it be that Eugénie Danglars has not recognized the man who once ventured to aspire to her hand?"

"The Vicomte Cavalcanti?" cried Luciola.

"Yes, or rather Benedetto, the convict, the assassin!"

"Yes, it is he," said the prima donna, thoughtfully. "I am astonished, now, that I did not know him. The truth is, however, that he inspired me with such horror that I almost never looked at him. But why do you speak of him now, when I asked you about my mother?"

"Because this miserable Benedetto robbed his—your mother of the last money she had in the world, and at the same time did not hesitate to strike the poor woman a blow with his knife—"

"Good Heavens! But you said she was living!"

"And I told you the truth. The assassin intended to commit this crime, but God did not choose that it should be so, and after weary months of illness the poor woman recovered."

"Ah! where is she? Tell me, that I may go to her, and try to shed on her sad life some little sunshine."

"You are a good child, but it is impossible. Your mother had resolved to take refuge in a convent in Asia Minor. She was in the most abject poverty, when chance carried to her assistance Valentine de Villefort. You knew her?"

"No; she was as serious and reserved as I was gay and frivolous, but I always felt great interest in her."

"She is now Madame Morrel. Certain circumstances made it expedient that she should go to Europe with her husband, and as she has a young child, Madame Danglars was requested to become its governess."

"Poor thing!" said Luciola, with tears in her eyes.

"I know no one who would feel such a change so strongly."

"Your mother is very different from the woman you knew, and she accepted Valentine's offer with joy and gratitude. She has been gone three years, and I do not know where Morrel is now."

"But you expect to hear from him?"

"Most certainly I do. I am full of hope!"

At this moment a singular sound was heard like the echo of a subterranean bell. The Count arose.

"My child," he said, in that voice which had the wonderful quality of touching the hearts of those to whom he spoke, "I am glad to have seen you. If you have been imprudent in past years, if you have yielded to anger and selfishness, you are to-day worthy of all esteem and of the love of an honest man."

"Of D'Aslitta's? But where is he?"

Monte-Cristo shook his head sadly. "He was arrested hours ago!"

"Arrested! He will die! He will die! I must go to him!"

"Hush! child, this is madness! You can not go to him! He is in the citadel!"

Luciola wrung her hands. "They will torture him, they will kill him! Ah! Count, you are all-powerful, save him, I implore you! He is my Future, my life! But who betrayed him?" she cried.

"Can you ask?"

"Then it was that cowardly Benedetto!"

"Yes," said the Count, "it was he. You have

appealed to me, and I tell you that we will save D'Aslitta; but to do this I need your aid."

"My aid! Command me—I will do anything."

"The task is a difficult one, and will demand the most absolute devotion."

"And I am ready to give it, if he will but live!"

Monte-Cristo went to the door through which Haydée and the child had gone.

"Esperance!" he called.

His son appeared.

"Child," said the father, "come with us. From this day forth you will enter life and will learn what courage and devotion are, and you will learn to repair the mistakes made by your father."

He rang a bell and Ali obeyed the summons.

"Have they all come?" asked the Count.

Ali inclined his head.

"You remember all the directions I have given? You will act when necessary."

Ali assented energetically.

"Come with me," said Monte-Cristo to Luciola "and place your hand in that of my son."

He lifted a portière and descended a staircase covered with a thick carpet that deadened all sound. Luciola and Esperance followed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MEETING.

MONTE-CRISTO opened a large door and the trio found themselves in a hall, where about a hundred men were gathered. They all received him with suppressed shouts of "Vive l'Italie!"

The Count shook hands with an old man, the Marquis de Santa Croce, an ardent defender of independence. Luciola was instantly surrounded by patriots. These men belonged to all classes—workingmen and noblemen were confounded in one common cause.

The Marquis de Santa Croce was the first to address the assembly.

"Are you ready?" he cried; "are you ready to fight for the national flag?"

"Down with the foreigners!" was the reply.

"Will the Count of Monte-Cristo now tell what he has heard from Vienna?"

"This very hour," said the Count, "Radetzsky will hear from Vienna that a revolution has taken place, and this same hour will witness the flight of the Viceroy from Milan."

There was a movement of surprise, almost of incredulity, among the crowd.

"My couriers have outstripped those of the Emperor,

and I know still more. The Emperor made several concessions before the *émeute*, and signed several decrees containing concessions—"

"No concessions!" cried a voice. "Liberty, entire and absolute!"

"Wait!" said the Count. "The Emperor has ordered the abolition of the censor and permits liberty of the press, and also the convocation of the Germanic States."

There was a moment of silence, for this was most curious as well as important. The Marquis de Santa Croce now stated that this convocation of the States would not take place for four months.

Angry exclamations followed this announcement, which proved the worthlessness of the promises made in a moment of terror. A young man advanced.

"My father was murdered by Radetzsky's minions," he said, quietly. "There can be no treaty between us and our enemies! War unto death!"

Another youth said:

"My mother was killed by a pistol shot on the Corso de Servi. War unto death!"

And all as with one voice shouted, "War unto death!"

"But," said Monte-Cristo, when he could be heard, "in your passionate desire for freedom, have you measured the dangers you are about to incur? You say to yourselves that people who ask only for liberty are strong, and that you will necessarily triumph. You must not forget that treason and weakness—which is sometimes in its effects worse than treason—are always to be feared. But you will conquer! Yes, Milan will

be free, but it will not be until you have shed your blood—until you have made a rampart of your dead bodies for your beloved city; not until the allies on whom you now rely have deserted you. Knowing this, are you still ready to enter the conflict?"

Monte-Cristo's voice had a prophetic ring in it, and the name of the ally who was to desert them was uttered by the earnest crowd in low whispers. It was that of Charles Edward, King of Piedmont.

But the patriots, grave and pale, replied: "We are ready!"

"To arms, then!" shouted the Marquis de Santa Croce, "and may God be with us!"

"But," said a voice, "where is the Marquis d'Aslitta in this hour of danger? It is he who should lead us."

Luciola advanced, and with flashing eyes and heaving breast cried out, that the Marquis was arrested and in the citadel.

There was a cry of rage, and a shout, "To arms. To arms!"

"Yes," said Monte-Cristo, "to arms! Your friends are in the power of the enemy, and to-morrow's sun may herald their dying agony. To arms, in the name of humanity—in the name of freedom."

At this moment a man stepped from the crowd.

"Tell me," he said, "you whom we call friend, what guarantee can you give of your own sincerity?"

A cloud passed over Monte-Cristo's face. But he calmly placed Esperance by the side of the old Marquis de Santa Croce.

"You can believe in me," he said, "since I give you my son as hostage."

And the child, with head haughtily erect, said in his clear, boyish voice:

"Father, I will do my duty!"

Luciola threw her arms about him, crying:

"And I—I will march at your head singing the National Hymn!"

The enthusiasm that followed was immense. Monte-Cristo said to his child, in a low voice:

"Esperance, you will not forget that you are my son."

Then turning to the patriots, he gave his orders, concluding with the words: "Dawn will be the signal!"

"Vive l'Italie," answered the crowd, and Luciola, with her hands on her heart and eyes uplifted, sighed: God grant that D'Aslitta be saved."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MAJOR.

OUR readers have not forgotten that San Pietro, exasperated by Luciola's escape and by the stinging words of Monte-Cristo, had rushed into the Casino, and there meeting Major Bartolomeo, handed him over to the police.

Who was this Major Bartolomeo?

It were an insult to our readers to ask them if they remember the admirable scene in the romance of the great Dumas, when in the house of Monte-Cristo a father and son, who have never met, find themselves face to face—Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, and his son, Benedetto—the Vicomte Cavalcanti.

We have followed Benedetto up to the moment when, dashed by the tempest and the sea upon the Island of Monte-Cristo, he was spared by the Count. The boat in which he was placed was wrecked, and discovered by some fishermen. Benedetto hovered between life and death for months. When he had in some degree recovered, the scoundrel was comforted to find that the oak box was safe; the honest fishermen had not felt even the smallest curiosity as to its contents.

Benedetto was rich, and thanks to the wounds he

had received was unrecognizable, and stood ready to seize the first opportunity to re-enter the world. This opportunity soon came to him.

We have already said that conspiracies were rife at this time throughout Italy, and one night Benedetto, still unable to leave his bed in the modest cottage that had sheltered him for weary weeks and months, heard the outer door open mysteriously, and then several men entered the room next the one he occupied. They spoke in low voices, but Benedetto's ear was quick. He discovered that these men belonged to a secret society, and that in a few days they were to receive arms and ammunition for the Italians.

Benedetto's plans were instantly formed. In three days he left the people who had been so kind to him and who parted from him with tears. A wagoner took him to Lucca. There he fitted himself out with a wardrobe befitting a gentleman, and obtained a passport for Milan. He was received by the agents of Radetzsky, and to them betrayed his late hosts, who were surprised just as they had successfully accomplished their patriotic work. They were taken prisoners, and shot.

Benedetto, now Comte de San Pietro, became the favorite of Radetzsky.

We know the rest, but we must touch upon the Major who, after being despoiled of his borrowed paternity by Monte-Cristo, had returned to Lucca, and there exercised the honorable profession of croupier in a gambling house.

Major Bartolomeo had no claim to the name of

Cavalcanti; nor could he have shown the certificate of his marriage to Oliva Corsenari, Marquise and patrician, because he had never known any such person. If his heart did not beat tumultuously when he embraced the son of the said Oliva, it was because he never had a child. Bartolomeo had been loved and was still adored by a woman who, though no marquise nor patrician, was nevertheless a queen of beauty in his eyes. She was known simply as Carlotta Vartelli, and called herself a widow. She had no resources, and lived on the scanty income of the croupier in the green Polish coat.

When Bartolomeo went back to Lucca, he handed this fifty thousand livres to the signora, who was by no means a foolish virgin to see life through the halo lent by her imagination.

She had known days of splendor, and more than one gentleman had sworn to die at her feet. But years had quickly put these to flight, and only one of them all remained faithful. And this was the good Major.

A woman who had seen less of life, would have said, when Bartolomeo gave her that money:

"We have fasted long enough, let us feast now!"

But Carlotta said, very sensibly:

"Do they make much money at your Casino?"

"Heaps."

"And pay you a petty salary? Why do you not open a Casino yourself?"

Bartolomeo was enchanted; but as his natural kindness of heart did not permit him to open a rival establishment and thus injure those who had extended

a helping hand to him when in trouble, he decided to go to Milan.

Thanks to the beauty of the signora, who really had the bearing of a queen, the Casino was a great success. But in every cup there is a drop of gall. One evening, when the signora was in the best of spirits and the Major, in his green braided polonaise, was doing the honors of the Casino with great dignity, a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a voice murmured in his ear:

"Good evening, papa!"

These strange words caused the Major to start, and turning quickly, he beheld a man of tall figure, with a terribly scarred face.

"Signor!" he stammered, "I have not the honor—"

The stranger seized him by one of the frogs of his much-braided garment, and drew him into a small room on one side.

"My dear sir," said the unknown, "are there any prisons in Italy?"

"Upon my word, sir—"

"I only ask the question. But if by accident it should leak out—if some indiscreet person should happen to mention in this gorgeous salon that Major Bartolomeo went in Paris by a very different name, and that he obtained money on false pretences—"

"But, sir—"

"And if it should be known that the name he had called himself was one of the oldest in Italy—Cavalcanti, for example."

The Major coughed violently.

"Under such circumstances, do you think it would

be possible for you to continue this very lucrative business?"

Bartolomeo became very pale. He had embarked his fifty thousand francs in this business, he had taken a long lease of the place, and if an exposure came he was hopelessly ruined.

The stranger continued, with a sneer:

"Pretty bad case—is it not, papa?"

"Zounds! sir, why do you call me papa? Ha! I have it—Paris! Cavalcanti!"

And Bartolomeo opened his arms to embrace the now recognized stranger.

"Pshaw—none of that nonsense!" said San Pietro, roughly. "We are not at Monte-Cristo's!"

"More 's the pity!" sighed Bartolomeo. "But tell me about yourself."

"By no means! All you need know is that I am now called the Count San Pietro."

"The friend of Radetzsky?"

"The same."

Bartolomeo exclaimed: "And you an Italian!"

"In the first place," answered Benedetto, "I am not an Italian. And, in the next place, I would advise you not to make impertinent comments on a man who can—tell too much about you!"

Bartolomeo gasped for breath. He saw that there was more to come, that Benedetto had conditions to make.

The end of this may be readily divined. San Pietro, traitor and spy as he was, compelled the Major to act as his spy. He became the creature of San Pietro,

and reported everything that went on in the Casino, and every word spoken by the Italians, to the Count.

Bartolomeo asked himself at times how he could endure this life, and swore to kill the scoundrel that inflicted it upon him. A man may wear a green polonaise, he may be a great rascal, and yet true to his country. And old Bartolomeo was Italian at heart. Cheating and swindling were trifles, but to sell his country!

But what could he do? If he refused to obey the mandates of his task-master he would be exposed to the authorities, imprisoned and ruined. He therefore yielded, and San Pietro promised him his protection in return for his services.

This was a bargain. But the Major was by no means so simple as he seemed, and he contrived to drive most of the Italians from his Casino. He was arrogant and disagreeable to them, and in a little time had no one to watch except D'Aslitta.

In vain had Bartolomeo endeavored to drive this man away also. He would not go—he remained, the last Italian, on the best of terms with Hermann and the others, who passed their evenings in abusing Italy. D'Aslitta seemed utterly indifferent to these insults, and one day let Bartolomeo understand that he comprehended all the difficulties under which he labored. Bartolomeo was delighted and thereupon gave himself body and soul to D'Aslitta. It pleased him to deceive Benedetto whom he hated, and he soon became one of the most active among the conspirators

When San Pietro ordered him to watch, he did so—but he watched Austrians, instead of Italians!

Not being suspected, he was of great service to the cause; and the old rascal was glad to terminate his career in doing something that was good.

For some time, however, San Pietro had had his eye upon him. Traitors scent treason. And when D'Aslitta nearly slipped through his fingers and when Monte-Cristo hurled those terrible words at him, Benedetto had a revelation. His fury expended itself on Bartolomeo, who was within an hour sent to a dungeon in the citadel.

The major lay for an hour half stunned on a bundle of straw, wondering what would happen to him.

"It is clear," he said, half aloud, "that Benedetto has discovered my little game. I am here first because I am an Italian, and next because I would not betray my country. And if I am called upon to perish on the scaffold, the people will venerate my memory."

His imagination pictured the dramatic scene; he saw himself walking with a steady step, surrounded by soldiers. He would stand on the scaffold, and there say to the gaping crowd:

"Brothers, I bequeath my blood to my country!"

At this moment the door of his dungeon opened and three men entered, two carrying torches; the other was Benedetto.

"Get up, rascal, and follow me," said that individual

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CHAMBER OF TORTURE.

BENEDETTO'S words were not especially agreeable to the Major, who opened his mouth to expostulate; but the torch-bearers seized him by the arm, pulled him upon his feet and pushed him so roughly, that he nearly broke his neck at the corner of the staircase. He was not pleased at going down instead of up. Nevertheless, he soon found himself in a long, vaulted passage, the walls of which were running with moisture. Finally he came to a heavy door, bolted and barred. One of the men took down the bars, the other applied a gigantic key, and the door opened with that peculiar noise we hear in similar scenes on the stage.

Bartolomeo was by no means reassured by what he saw, for on the walls hung mysterious tools and extraordinary collars, and on the floor lay boards bristling with nails. The Major shuddered, for like all Italians he had heard much of the Chamber of Torture. The man who had unlocked the door pointed to a log of wood.

"Sit there," he said.

Bartolomeo nodded approvingly and obeyed, shrinking back, however, from the touch of the grim instruments on the wall. The two men leaned against the

door, while the Major's thoughts wandered back to the Casino. He wondered what Vartelli would do; she was a woman of energy and would not accept the situation with calmness. One of the men now lighted his pipe, and Bartolomeo said, with excessive politeness:

"Can't you oblige me with a little of that tobacco?"

But these words were greeted by a blow on his shoulders which made him wince, and a low growl forbidding him to speak. San Pietro now appeared. He wore the uniform of an officer, a sword and a long cloak, which was somewhat theatrical, but the Count had a little of the strolling player about him.

"You can go outside," he said to the guards, "I wish to speak to the prisoner," who rather rejoiced at the departure of the guards.

San Pietro took a seat, and folding his arms on his breast:

"You understand," he said, "that it is useless to lie to me—that old harridan you live with has told the whole truth."

Carlotta a harridan! At this the Major lost his temper.

"It is not true!" he cried. "And besides, you being a traitor yourself—"

San Pietro lifted his hand, and then began to laugh.

"You are a fool, a double-twisted fool! I have been watching you for some time. You could have saved me and made a fortune; but you preferred to play a more dangerous game, which you have lost."

Bartolomeo was by this time in a furious rage, but

instinct warned him to be prudent. This time he did not reply. Benedetto continued:

"In spite of the engagement between us, you have been the accomplice of those who desire to subvert legitimate authority."

There were two men in Bartolomeo—one the Major of the Casino, and the other the Italian. The Major could swallow much, but the digestion of the Italian was more difficult.

"Legitimate?" he repeated.

"Yes, legitimate!" cried San Pietro. "Do you suppose for a moment that your ridiculous country—the land of the dead—can resist our armies?"

Bartolomeo had recovered his coolness.

"Monsieur Benedetto," he said, "do you propose to give me a lecture on history?"

"I propose to let you know that I have discovered your treachery. You have sold Radetzsky's secrets to the Italians!"

"Whoever said this, lied."

"It was Carlotta Vartelli."

Bartolomeo looked in the face of his companion.

"That is false," he said, calmly, "unless you employed some infamous means."

Benedetto pointed a pistol at the Major.

"This was the means I employed," he sneered, "and it was as efficacious as usual."

The Major understood. Poor Carlotta! She was but a woman, after all! He had told Carlotta the truth, and she had revealed it under pressure. He knew that he was in great danger, and that at a word from San Pietro

the guards would rush in and put him to the torture Nevertheless, as he thought of Carlotta and the insult she had suffered, he hurled at Benedetto the one word, "Coward!"

"That will do! Another syllable, and I will kill you! What I want to know now is the rendezvous of these cursed Italians."

"I do not know," answered the Major, quietly.

"You do not know? And yet, for six months you have been on terms of intimacy with the chiefs of the Italian conspiracy — with D'Aslitta himself — but I fancy you will not resist certain arguments I can offer!"

It must be admitted that the Major did not like the turn the conversation was taking, especially as Benedetto, as if inadvertently, laid his hand on one of the wicked looking instruments hanging against the wall.

"Now then, sir, will you tell me where these Italian conspirators meet? If not—"

"If not?" sighed the Major.

"My assistants are people you have heard of, and they will, I fancy, kindly permit you to make your choice among these various toys."

Benedetto laughed, and his laugh, added to his theatrical costume, reminded Bartolomeo of a clown at a country fair.

"Well?" said Benedetto.

Bartolomeo summoned all his courage, remembered that he was an Italian, and said:

"Go to the devil!"

"I think you can't have understood me. Look at this little machine, for example."

And Benedetto displayed an immense pair of scissors furnished with mysterious screws. Bartolomeo turned very pale.

"Once more I ask where these conspirators meet, for I wish to take them all at once in my net. Will you speak?"

But Bartolomeo had an idea. He knew that Benedetto was young and agile, but he, in spite of his fifty-five years, knew that in strength he was himself more than a match for him. It was true, that just without the door there were two men ready to come at a sound; but suppose he leaped at Benedetto's throat and succeeded in choking him so that he could not make a sound! Bartolomeo did not listen to what San Pietro was saying, for he knew only too well what he meant. This was what took place.

Benedetto, as we have said, had something of the mountebank about him. He was one of the kind who bluster, talk of fighting duels, and say where they will hit their adversaries. It pleased him now to frighten the Major, though he had fully determined, if he ground every bone in the poor man's body to dust, to get the information he required. But he wanted to make the scene as picturesque as possible.

"Listen a moment, my good Cavalcanti," he said. "You are this very moment wondering what I mean to do—whether I shall take little nips out of your side with red hot pinchers, or tear your finger nails out by the roots—but I swear to you, in memory of our

ancient friendship, that neither your sides nor your finger nails shall suffer."

"Ah!" said the Major, still occupied with his plan.

"But you understand that there are instruments here which will crush every bone in your body. Will you speak?"

Benedetto laid his hand on the Major's shoulder.

"No," answered that courageous being.

"D'Aslitta is in my power—he is imprisoned here. And if you die in silence, I can still make him speak."

Bartolomeo looked Benedetto full in the face.

"I have stolen," he said, "I have forged; but there is one thing I have not done—I have not betrayed my country. And now, devil, do your worst!"

Benedetto uttered an angry roar like that of a wild beast, and ran to a closet in one corner of the room and opened it.

"Come here!" he said to the Major, who obeyed mechanically.

"Do you see that?" said Benedetto, pointing to a strange object of metal somewhat in the shape of a human head.

"Yes, I see it."

"Do you know what it is?"

"Not at all."

"Very well, I will tell you. Some five hundred years ago, a great lord surprised a page with his wife. Being a wise man, he made no noise nor scandal, but treated the page as usual for a while, and one day made him a present of a marvellously chiselled helmet. No sooner had the great lord gone away than the page

tried on the helmet, which by hidden springs held him so tightly that he was smothered."

"Well?"

"Well, my dear Major, if your obstinacy continues, I shall call my men; they will fit this helmet to you, which you will notice is clamped to the wall by a chain—and that means eternal silence and starvation."

Bartolomeo panted for breath, and did not speak.

"You understand, I see. There will not be the smallest hope of deliverance. You will be suffocated, and—"

He did not finish, for Bartolomeo had seized him and thrust his head into the helmet, and snapped the springs. And then leaning against the wall went into convulsions of silent laughter. He then proceeded to dress his prisoner in his own garments, abandoning to his enemy his beloved green polonaise. Then he dressed himself in the uniform of an Austrian captain, opened the door and passed out before the guards, saying to himself:

"And now, to find D'Aslitta!"

CHAPTER XXX.

WELLS OR OUBLIETTES.

THE Marquis D'Aslitta was, as we have stated, shut up in a dungeon in the citadel. He had not once opened his lips. He was thankful to be alone, that he might think over the events that had preceded and accompanied his arrest. It was he that had put the match to the powder, by preparing the demonstration at the theatre San Carlo, of which Ticellini had been the unconscious instrument.

"How was it," he asked himself, "that San Pietro had fallen so suddenly upon his track?"

There was between these two men the most bitter hatred. D'Aslitta hated in San Pietro the traitor and the spy, while San Pietro hated in D'Aslitta the man superior to himself; and D'Aslitta knew that he had neither justice nor pity to expect.

But this was not all. The same hatred would pursue the Luciola, would pursue Italy, and San Pietro, in his triumph, would be a scourge and an executioner. D'Aslitta clenched his hands and swore to defend his life, not because he was afraid to die, but because he had a mission to fulfil. There was but one person in the world on whom he could rely now, and that was the Count of Monte-Cristo; but what could that man

do, powerful as he was, except to arouse the people, and they would be conquered immediately.

The situation was a fearful one, but he did not abandon all hope. His eyes by this time were accustomed to the darkness of the dungeon, and he could distinguish a window barred with iron. It was high up, but he was not bound, and the gag had been removed from his mouth. He threw back his chest and drew several long breaths as he walked around his dungeon, feeling the wall with his hand. The stones were unbroken and presented no roughness by which he might hope to reach the window; and even if he succeeded in that, he felt sure that the bars were firmly fastened. But there was no time to lose, he expected his door to open every minute.

Suddenly he uttered a hoarse cry. His foot had encountered some obstacle, and falling, his head, it seemed to him, had encountered a large open space. Involuntarily he threw out his arms; his hand caught something and he found himself suspended, held only by his fingers. What had happened, D'Aslitta understood. In the center of his dungeon was a well, protected only by a low curb. He had fallen in this aperture and thus hung suspended. Where did that well go? Was it a well, or only one of those *oubliettes* into which victims were thrown? If it were a well, there must be water at the bottom, and how deep?

All these thoughts flashed through D'Aslitta's mind. Singularly enough, he was perfectly calm. Anything, in fact, seemed to him better than the four walls of a prison. But first he must find some foothold, for his

muscles would not long bear their present strain. The stones were damp, and he felt that he was slipping He felt about with his knee for some point of support, and suddenly felt a projection which permitted him to make an almost superhuman effort. Leaning on the sharp point, and regardless of the pain it inflicted, he was enabled to snatch at the outer curb, by which he drew himself up until he succeeded in seating himself on the edge of the well.

He was extremely curious, for it was preposterous to suppose that in a dungeon like this any path to liberty would be left open. This well must be of incalculable depth, with water enough to drown any rash and venturesome person who attempted to solve its mysteries. He determined at all events to try for himself. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation of joy. He had not been searched, and in his pocket he had found a small silver match box, a present from the Luciola.

He had given up smoking entirely since the cigar had become the emblem of oppression, so that he dreaded lest he should find the box empty. It contained two matches, but they had been there a long time, and they might not burn He tried one, but it did not light, and at this moment he fancied that he heard a slight noise coming from the well. D'Aslitta held his breath and listened. Not a sound. Did he see anything, or was he deceived by his strained eyes?

No, for again came that distant sound. D'Aslitta hastily rubbed his one match upon his coat sleeve and held it down the well; but the light was too feeble, he could see nothing. He held it until it burned his

fingers and then dropped it. At the same moment he heard a voice utter a fearful oath. He placed his two hands to his mouth and shouted these words down the well:

"Is there anyone there?"

He waited, but there was no reply, which was in itself a good thing, since it showed that the person, whoever it was, wished to conceal his presence.

"Answer me — you are a prisoner?" shouted D'Aslitta.

Still no reply.

"I am not an enemy," D'Aslitta continued, "I am a prisoner like yourself."

A melancholy voice replied:

"I am nearly drowned—that is all!"

"Strange!" thought D'Aslitta, "I surely know that voice. Who are you?" he asked.

There was no reply. But D'Aslitta was not intimidated by the silence; either this man had fallen into this well—and in that case his life must be saved—or he had entered it by some path which would take them both out. One thing he had learned, however, which was that this man was not a foe. Singularly enough, however, this person now lighted a match. The momentary light gleamed on the white and gold of an Austrian officer, but at the same moment the voice cried in Italian:

"If you can help me, for God's sake do so, for I shall drown here!"

D'Aslitta felt that, enemy or not, he must do what he could to save him. He remembered that he still

wore the silken scarf that Luciola had wrapped around his waist. It measured several yards, and was as thick as a board. He dropped one end into the well.

"Catch this," he shouted, "and you are saved!"

It was some little time before D'Aslitta felt that the scarf had been seized.

"Have you it?" called Giorgio.

"Yes—pull away!"

Giorgio supported himself on the curb of the well, and with his youthful vigor pulled up a heavy fish. He presently felt a hand on his arm, and a man tumbled over the curb and fell exhausted, murmuring:

"Ah! if Carlotta could see me now!"

This name was a revelation to the prisoner.

"Bartolomeo, is it you?" he cried.

"Yes—but who the deuce are you? It is so dark here that I can't see a feature in your face."

"It is D'Aslitta."

"Zounds! What strange luck is this—I was looking for you!"

"But where have you been?"

"It is a long story. I can only tell you now that I have escaped from the claws of that fiend, San Pietro, but I fancy I have done for him so that he won't trouble us again!"

"You have killed him, then?"

"I don't say that, exactly, but he is having a pretty hard time just this minute. But we must not linger here!"

"One moment. Why do you wear that uniform!"

"Did that poor little match show you that? I will

tell you another time. I ssure you, however, that I am still true to Italy. I have been wandering about in the subterranean regions of the citadel, fearing that I should come across some of those confounded Germans, and you know that I could never conquer their jaw-breaking language. I was feeling my way along the damp walls, when suddenly I gave my head a terrible knock. I seemed to have come to a low door. I went on, and soon found that my feet were wet. I tried to go back, but I could not turn around. I was in a narrow passage where I could not stand up. Then all at once I felt that I was in a wider space. I felt the air in my face, but it was not like that of Araby, be it understood, and just then I saw the light of your match. At first, I thought it best not to answer you, but reflected that matters could not be much worse than they were."

"But why were you arrested?"

"Another time I will tell you all that."

"You can surely tell me about Luciola?"

"Oh! she is safe. She is as brave as she is clever. Monte-Cristo, too, will see that she meets with no harm."

D'Aslitta drew a long breath of relief. If Luciola were safe, it seemed to him that he cared little what became of him.

"But," said Bartolomeo, "we are losing time. Let us go!"

D'Aslitta laughed in spite of himself.

"That is easy to say—but where and how?" he asked.

"I don't know!" answered the Major, somewhat dolefully.

"I have not seen my cell, and I have no matches. I had just one, and it is burned."

"But I have plenty. They were in my breast pocket, and the water did not reach them."

D'Aslitta's cell was like most others. There was a heavy door and a high window.

"I don't see what we are to do," said Bartolomeo, "unless we go by the way we came, and that is not very easy!"

"But suppose we cannot find our way out?"

"You may be more fortunate than I!"

"At any rate, we can try," answered D'Aslitta. You got up because I was here to help you, but I don't see how more than one of us can go down!"

"Nor I!" answered Bartolomeo, "but I have been saying to myself, in the last hour or two, that I have led a pretty bad life, and that were I to die now I should be no great loss!"

"You must not say that, Major!"

"I only say what I think. I am anxious about Carlotta, and if you escape, I want you to promise that she shall never come to want. I may rely on you to tell her, too that I tried to do my duty!"

Bartolomeo's voice trembled as he went on.

"Many persons would miss you—Monte-Cristo and the Luciola. Besides, Italy needs you. Come, then I will hold the scarf and you will go down, and do the best you can. I don't think there is any danger of

drowning, and I believe you will find an outlet to the canal. Now go!"

"No—I will not!" answered D'Aslitta.

"But that is stupid. You are one of the chiefs of the conspiracy—the whole thing may fail if you are absent. Your friends may be taken and shot, and yet you hesitate!"

D'Aslitta was silent. These words had struck home, for when one belongs to a cause, one has no will of one's own. Yes, his friends awaited him. His absence might compromise the whole enterprise, and the holy cause might be sacrificed. His hand sought the Major's.

"My friend," he said, "I accept the sacrifice, but remember that I shall deliver you or die in the attempt!"

"Never mind that—I will look out for myself!"

Bartolomeo's voice was not very steady, for he had not the slightest expectation of seeing Carlotta again

D'Aslitta hesitated still. Suddenly the tread of armed men was heard approaching.

"Quick! Quick!" said the Major. "Farewell, and remember your promise!"

The noise came nearer. In an instant more D'Aslitta was suspended by the scarf, and just as the Major felt it relax in his hand, the key was turned in the lock. He dropped the scarf into the well and threw himself into a corner of the dungeon.

The door opened.

Benedetto appeared with several soldiers. Yes, Benedetto had been rescued before he was smothered,

and had now come to vent his rage on D'Aslitta, as he took it for granted that Bartolomeo had escaped him.

"Up with you!" cried San Pietro.

Bartolomeo did not move. He was all ears—was D'Aslitta safe?

San Pietro snatched a torch from the hand of one of the soldiers, and going to the corner flashed it into the face of the man who stood there.

Bartolomeo bowed low.

"How are you, Andrea Cavalcanti?" he said, with a laugh.

San Pietro started back with an oath. He had come to assuage his hate, and now beheld himself face to face with this clown.

"Where is D'Aslitta?" he cried. "And how did this man get here?"

But the guards could not answer this question, and vet they knew perfectly well that D'Aslitta had been consigned to this dungeon.

He must have tried to escape by the well!" said one.

"Then he is a dead man." answered the other.

The Major turned pale. Why did the guard say this?

"Hear, see!" said one of the men to San Pietro, holding his torch down in the well.

Bartolomeo, held in the grasp of two soldiers, could see nothing, but he heard a strange sound.

"I see a lot of water," said San Pietro, "which seems to be rising "

"Yes, and in a few minutes it will be within three feet of this curb."

"What does it mean?"

"Simply, that fifteen minutes ago the Commandant issued an order that the sluices of the San Maria aqueduct should be opened. The water began at once to pour in, and has, by this time, filled all the subterranean passages of the citadel. If any prisoner was trying to make his escape through these passages, he was to a certainty caught by the water and drowned."

'Speak!" said San Pietro, to the Major, "did that man try to get away by the well?"

Bartolomeo did not speak, but a large tear dropped on his gray moustache.

"Here, look at this!" said one of the soldiers, catching something with his sword that was floating on the top of the water.

It was a silken scarf, which San Pietro recognized.

"Dead!" he cried. "Escaped me! But at all events, he did not take her with him! Take this man away, and shoot him at daybreak!" And he left the cell.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ESPERANCE, THE SON OF MONTE-CRISTO.

AT dawn all the town was awake. Placards on the wall made known to the government of the Emperor the decision of the Lombardy people.

The Municipal Palace was surrounded by a clamorous crowd. The members of the Council fled by secret issues. The President alone remained at his post to sign the decrees presented by the insurgents.

In the Rue del Monti a strong patrol was posted, who fired on the people without giving them the smallest warning. Radetzsky had given this order, and the cries of the wounded and dying filled the air.

At a window of a house which was destined to be the central point of the insurrection, stood the Count of Monte-Cristo. His hand was on his son's shoulder.

"Father," said Esperance, when he heard the sharp discharge of musketry, "what does all this mean?"

The Count lifted his son in his arms that he might look down into the street. He pointed to the men flying for their lives, and the stains of blood upon the pavement.

"Look, my son, what see you?"

"I see wounded men who cannot stand; I see fright-

ened women carrying children; oh! father, one of those children is dead!"

"Look, child, what see you?"

"I see soldiers at the end of the street loading their guns. Ah! father, they fire, and the women fall. What does it mean?"

"It means, my son, that men are man's worst enemies!"

It is a terrible thing, when a combat like this takes place in a town where each house becomes a citadel to be taken; each corner a redoubt, each embrasure an entrenchment. Monte-Cristo listened, knowing too well that each discharge of musketry left behind it ruin and despair.

"Father," said Esperance, "among those men who are fighting, is there no room for us?"

"Wait, boy—wait. The hour has not yet come when I shall bid you go to keep the oath that I have sworn to-night!"

"Father, look! See that flag!"

A man—an Italian, at the peril of his life, had succeeded in climbing upon the roof of a church, and had planted there the National flag. As the man stood there, boldly relieved against the gray morning sky, they saw him throw out his arms wildly and disappear. But the flag remained.

"Esperance," said the Count of Monte-Cristo, "thus it is with all Humanity. The brave and the strong climb to the summits and set their banners floating. and perish. The banners wave in the free air and sunshine as a beacon to the weak-hearted."

Bertuccio came in hurriedly.

"Well! what have you learned?" asked the Count.

"Only that Monsieur d'Aslitta is not in the citadel."

"But if he had made his escape, he would be here!"

The agent could learn little, except that in the place of the Count they found the man who was known in Paris as Major Cavalcanti. Monte-Cristo started.

"And as our agent left the citadel he learned that this Cavalcanti was to be shot at once."

Luciola now burst into the room, and fell at Monte-Cristo's feet.

"D'Aslitta is dead!" she cried.

"Dead! how do you know?"

"Listen—look!"

Monte-Cristo leaned from the window and saw a terrible sight. Men of the people were bearing a body on a litter. That body was that of D'Aslitta.

"These men went to the outer wall of the citadel," sobbed Luciola, "to reconnoitre, and they saw a body in the ditch. They succeeded at the peril of their lives in getting it out. It was D'Aslitta's body!"

The crowd in the street shouted, "Vengeance! Death to the murderers!"

Monte-Cristo stood in silence. He had told Luciola that he would save her lover, and now D'Aslitta was dead. He felt her sobs as the keenest of reproaches.

He passed his hand over his troubled brow, and Esperance, watching his father, saw his face brighten. He gently pushed Luciola aside, and with his usual calm step went down the stairs and out into the street. The crowd welcomed him with acclamations. Monte-

Cristo did not seem to hear them. His eyes looked afar off at some horizon too distant for any one but himself to see. He went up to the litter, and said to the bearers, "Stop, and let me look."

There was a profound silence, broken only by whispers which told Monte-Cristo's name to those who had never before seen him.

The Count lifted the frozen eyelids and studied the pupils. Luciola had followed him, and she too leaned over this pale face with streaming eyes.

Suddenly it seemed to the Count that there was a quiver on the lips.

"Carry this man to my house," he said quietly.

The bearers, without questioning this order, lifted the litter, when suddenly there was a cry of terror.

"The soldiers! The soldiers! They are upon us!"

Monte-Cristo turned.

"You love your chief? You love Italy?" he asked.

"Yes! Yes!"

"Then use every means to make my house a fortress, and who knows, perhaps Italy and D'Aslitta will be saved!"

Luciola had heard those words. She threw back her noble head.

"You hear!" she cried, "pile up the barricades that the enemy may not enter this street. Keep them out, I say!"

And in the twinkling of an eye, carriages and wagons were overturned, furniture was thrown from the windows, and added to the pile.

The Austrians fired, the balls struck the stone façades and fell back among the combatants.

The Luciola seized a flag of the National colors, and mad with grief, and yet with a strange glow of hope at her heart, she climbed to the top of the barricade, and there, with flaming cheeks and hair floating in the wind, incited them all to courage.

The patriots rushed to the other end of the street, and closed that, also, and thus improvised a citadel.

The spark had kindled the powder. The tocsin was ringing fast and loud, a strange sound. It was like the voice of a desperate people demanding justice from God.

Suddenly the Austrians were seen to scatter; they had been attacked in the rear by other Italians.

Luciola descended from the barricade and hastened to the room where the Count of Monte-Cristo stood by the side of the inanimate body of the Count d'Aslitta. He had in his hand a tiny bottle, from which he was dropping a red liquid between the close shut teeth of the young man.

The old Marquis de Santa Croce rushed into the room. "The danger is increasing, sir!" he cried. "Radetzsky has commanded the bombardment of the city from the citadel where he is. Will you now abandon us? A heavy responsibility is yours, and yet you linger here!"

Monte-Cristo turned.

"All that I have promised, I will do!" he cried.

"But there is no time to lose. We have neither guns nor ammunition!"

"Ali!" called Monte-Cristo.

The Nubian instantly appeared.

"You have the key of the cellar where the guns and ammunition are stored?"

Ali bowed.

"Give it to the Marquis de Santa Croce, and then show him the way. And, Marquis, I have sworn, too, that Milan shall be free. Have no doubts. Tell your friends not to hesitate, but to strike their blows steadily and well. To-morrow will see Radetzsky flying for his life. I promised that D'Aslitta should lead the people. Look!"

He pointed to the form before him. D'Aslitta had opened his eyes, and was looking about him. The old Marquis hurried forward, but Monte-Cristo extended a warning hand.

"He sees you not," he said; "the night is still dark to him."

"Ah! thanks and blessings be yours; you have performed a miracle!" Luciola exclaimed.

But the Count murmured the name of the Abbé Faria as the source whence came his wonderful power.

"I must remain here, Marquis," said Monte-Cristo, "I must complete this work. I have not forgotten my promises. Arms and ammunition you have, and your chief shall be restored to you, and now I give you still more." He called his son. "Esperance!"

The child ran toward him.

"I have given you to the great cause of Liberty and Honor. Go and keep my place until I come to relieve you."

Haydée entered the room, deadly pale. She had heard these words. She took her son in her arms, and with her colorless lips pronounced a blessing upon him and bade him do his duty. The old man and the child went out and were greeted with uncovered heads by the people.

The Count of Monte-Cristo had turned again to the Marquis D'Aslitta and was watching him closely. Haydée said to him in a low voice:

"A dispatch has come from France, brought by a man who says he was once the captain of the Pharaoh."

"Then he comes from Marseilles."

"Yes, and his name is Penelon."

Monte-Cristo uttered a low exclamation. He had indeed entrusted a commission to this man, and a name was on his lips which he hastily suppressed. He took the dispatch and broke the seal. This was its contents:

"I am dying of grief. Come to me.

"MERCÉDÈS."

He handed the paper to Haydée.

"Read this," he said, "and tell me what I shall do."

Haydée looked at the name that contained so much of Monte-Cristo's past, and said quickly:

"When shall we go?"

The Count kissed her hand.

"We will go," he said, "as soon as my work is done. Give the necessary orders that the yacht may be made ready for sea. And now," he added, turning to D'Aslitta, "you whom I have sworn to save, arise!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

SMALL MEANS—GRAND RESULTS.

"TAKE away this man and have him shot at day break," said Benedetto, and the Major felt that his fate was sealed, for he had not the smallest doubt that D'Aslitta had perished in the sudden rush of water.

Where was he now going? he asked himself, as, under the guidance of a corporal, he was led through a series of subterranean passages. It was of little consequence; he might as well be shot in one place as another. Still, he was surprised when he was left in quite a comfortable room; he fancied, however, that it was still night, and not dawn, as he had at first supposed. The corporal presently returned, and Bartolomeo had a vague idea that he had seen the man somewhere before, but why was he back again? There was no law against asking a question, so the Major said in his sulkiest tone:

"What do you want of me?"

The corporal looked somewhat disturbed by this question. and did not reply.

"Because, unless you desire something especial, I should be pleased if you would leave me alone."

The corporal took a step toward the door, twisting

his moustache as he went. He was young and his eyes were singularly bright. Bartolomeo stopped him.

"You can tell me what time it is, if you choose."

The corporal consulted a huge timepiece, and announced that it was three o'clock.

"And the sun rises—"

"At six—or rather, half-past six."

"I should much rather be shot at once than wait three hours. Can it be done?"

"Impossible; not until sunrise, and perhaps—" said the corporal, hesitatingly.

"Well, then, go at once, for I have to prepare my soul, and that is no easy task, you may be sure!"

The corporal did not move.

"The truth is," he said, slowly, "I don't want to shoot you."

"Young man, your sentiments do you honor."

"No, I don't want to shoot you, but—"

"But what?"

"You belong to the Casino, where the handsome signora is, don't you?"

"I do; your taste is excellent."

"And I have seen you play a game there that I wish to learn."

"And what is the game?" asked the Major, without showing the smallest surprise.

"It comes from France, and is played with a deal of five cards."

"Yes, young man, it is *ecarté*. I imported it; and you wish to learn it?"

"I do, indeed, and shall be very grateful."

"Very good," interrupted the Major; "I will teach you. We will play until six, and then I must have a few moments to myself before I am shot."

The corporal whipped a pack of cards from his pocket and Bartolomeo's eyes began to sparkle. He learned the game with wonderful quickness, and after a while Bartolomeo complained of great thirst.

"I will get some brandy," said Fritz, the corporal, rushing from the room.

Bartolomeo, now left alone, smiled in an odd sort of way.

"Just take this," said Fritz, coming in with two glasses and a bottle.

They resumed their game, which Fritz won.

"And now some more brandy," said the Major.

Fritz continued to win game after game.

"What o'clock?" asked Bartolomeo.

"Half-past five."

"Then we have only a half hour?"

"We can stretch it a little."

Bartolomeo smiled faintly. He knew men and their natures. The game began again and now Bartolomeo won persistently and Fritz became excited. At this moment there was a knock at the door. A soldier appeared.

"Corporal," he said, "the sun has risen; you know what we have to do."

Bartolomeo rose and gathered up his money.

"I am sorry," he said, seriously, "that I cannot give you your revenge; but I have another engagement, which seems to be imperative."

He tossed off a huge glass of grog.

"But you can't take my money away with you "

"I won it fairly enough, I think."

"Yes, but you owe me my revenge."

"Very true; but under the circumstances—"

"I am ordered to shoot you, but Count de San Pietro s not my superior officer."

"But discipline is everything, and you had better obey your orders."

Corporal Fritz was deplorably tipsy by this time, and Bartolomeo saw that it was now or never with him.

"You are ordered to take me to the barracks, believe?"

"Yes."

"Obey that order, then. We can play two or three games there, perhaps."

Fritz hiccoughed his assent, and opening the door, called his men.

"Here is your prisoner," he said.

The soldiers looked at each other, but they had nothing to say. Bartolomeo, with great dignity, took his place in the centre of the squad, and they all marched off. Bartolomeo said to himself:

"*Ecarté* is not a bad game, after all!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EN AVANT!

THE streets were barricaded, the National flag was streaming from every accessible point, though riddled by Austrian bullets. The tocsin clanged all night, exciting the citizens to resistance.

Rain was falling in torrents, but nothing damped the ardor of the Italians. The contest assumed gigantic proportions, and it was easy to see that the life of a people was the stake for which they played.

In the Borromeo Palace, ladies were melting lead and making bullets. The choicest articles of furniture were cheerfully given to add to the barricades.

Finally Radetzsky demanded an armistice, but a fortnight's armistice meant for the Milanese, fatigue, famine and discouragement. They said no. There were certain barracks from which experienced engineers demolished the barricades as fast as they were built, with their cannon.

Suddenly a man, who had been released only the day before from a political prison, who was both feeble and so deformed that he walked on crutches, advanced under the murderous fire. He walked deliberately, with a torch in his hand, and held it to the door of the barracks. He waited until he saw the fire well

kindled, and then turned back and joined the patriots, unharmed.

This heroic act was saluted by shouts of enthusiasm. Further hesitation was now impossible, and the people hurled themselves at the door where now rose clouds of dark smoke.

"Vive l'Italie! Vive l'Italie!"

The door fell, and through the flames the patriots made their way and took officers and soldiers prisoners.

The people were generous: they committed no murders, but swept on to attack other barracks. Finally only one was left, the most dangerous of all. They made their assault and were repulsed. Again and again the attack was repeated. Suddenly there came profound silence on the part of the enemy, who no longer returned the fire of the assailants.

"What is that?" asked some one in the crowd.

A white flag was seen flying from the balcony—a flag of truce.

Ah! this was a solemn moment.

"Vive l'Italie!" shouted the patriots, advancing toward the barrack without hesitation or suspicion.

Suddenly there came an appalling discharge of musketry. Every window of the barracks belched fire upon the crowd, thus caught in this infamous snare. The dead and the wounded lay piled one on another, and the patriots fled.

Within an inner room of the barracks Bartolomeo and Fritz were playing cards. The Major, as we know, had a very positive interest in prolonging the contest, which he contrived to do.

Fifteen minutes before the terrible scene we have described, Fritz had lost all his money, and was in a great rage.

Bartolomeo, hearing the cannonading, played slowly knowing that his adversary was excited only when he had lost, and doing his best to prevent Fritz from noticing what was going on without, saying to himself that if the corporal did not now give the order to shoot him to his soldiers, it might be that it would be indefinitely postponed.

A soldier opened the door.

"Corporal, had we not better see if we are not needed without?"

"Go to the devil!" cried Fritz, angrily.

"Let us play for new stakes," said Bartolomeo, as he dealt the cards.

"What stakes?"

"My skin against yours."

"How is that? Your skin does not belong to you now, for I can have you shot at any moment!"

"Do you think so!" answered the Major, leaping upon him and snatching the pistols from his belt.

Fritz turned green with terror.

"Now go and bid this firing cease, and put out a flag of truce."

"But I am not master here!"

"Do as I say, and make haste. When you come back I will teach you a pretty thing in *ecarté*. You must not be long, though."

"But suppose they refuse?"

"I will teach you all the same!"

The door opened, and a Sergeant appeared.

"Corporal!" he cried, "things are going wrong. Your men refuse to fight with us."

Bartolomeo, getting behind Fritz, placed the two pistols against his back.

Feeling this pressure, Fritz, who was still tipsy, said with great dignity:

"In the name of the Emperor, I order you to show a flag of truce."

"You order me—you?"

"I am the bearer of secret instructions," said Fritz, becoming more and more arrogant, as Bartolomeo became firmer in the pressure of the pistols.

While the uncommissioned officer was deliberating, another of the same rank appeared.

"Sergeant, we have lost forty men—wounded and dead. What shall we do?"

"Hang out the white flag."

"I will ask for an armistice," answered the Sergeant, hurrying away, and in two minutes the firing ceased.

Then within the barracks was heard shouts and cries.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Fritz, rising hastily from the new game they had begun.

Rushing from the room, and having an uneasy conscience, he carefully locked the door behind him.

This was what had happened: A man, San Pietro, had entered the barracks by concealed and subterranean passages, just as the order had been given for capitulation. The Count called this an act of high treason, and fell into an ungovernable rage, and on the

instant devised an infernal plan. He gave orders that men should be posted at every window, and that others should stand ready to shoot the confiding patriots as they entered the court-yard.

We know what followed. The Italians were not only terrified, but exasperated. But after the first moment of surprise they surrounded the barracks, resolving that not one Austrian soldier should leave the place alive. They had a fear still of some nameless treason, and hesitated to give the signal for the attack.

Suddenly their ranks parted, and an old man and a child appeared. The man was the Marquis de Santa Croce, and the child was Esperance. The Marquis stood before the patriots.

"Soldiers!" he said, in a loud voice, "all the barracks save this one are in our power. The military hospital is also ours. The house of the Marshal Radetzsky has been taken, and one of our men has now in his possession the famous sword of which this executioner has been so proud. *En avant*, citizens and soldiers. I, an old man, and this child, will show you the way."

Esperance, seizing a banner, marched directly up to the dreaded barracks, and in one second the soldiers, who pressed on, had entered the court-yard. But in front of the steps stood a man with a carabine in his hands.

"Son of Monte-Cristo!" he cried, "it is at your father I strike!" And he fired at the child.

Esperance did not fall, but another did, and this was

old Bartolomeo, who had managed to escape from the room where he had been playing *ecarté*, and had arrived in time to throw himself before the child and receive the ball in his breast.

The patriots scattered over the barracks. San Pietro had disappeared.

Monte-Cristo and Luciola, at the head of a body of men commanded by D'Aslitta, now appeared, ready to give their assistance, Monte-Cristo shouting:

"Radetzsky has fled! The Austrians have vacated the citadel!" After thirty years of oppression, liberty had come!

"Father," said Esperance, to Monte-Cristo, "come, a man is dying! He dies for me."

"Bartolomeo!" cried the Count.

"Yes, it is Bartolomeo; or all that is left of him!"

"Let me see your wound. It may be that—"

"No, there can nothing be done. Shake hands with me, though."

"May I embrace you?" said Esperance.

"Follow the example of your father," gasped the Major. "I am sorry to die now, for I think I could have become a good citizen. Look out for Carlotta!'

His head fell back. He was dead.

"Peace be with you!" said Monte-Cristo, solemnly

An hour later Monte-Cristo was bidding Luciola and D'Aslitta farewell. The prima donna, on her knees. was pressing kiss after kiss on the hand that had restored her lover to her.

"Rise, Marquise," said Monte-Cristo, with a significant glance at the Marquis

D'Aslitta understood, and drew Luciola close to his side.

"My wife!" he murmured.

"Remember," said the Count of Monte-Cristo, "that a man should have but three passions. God, his family and his country."

"Why do you leave us?" asked Luciola, sadly.

"Because others call me; because others need me!'

And he murmured the word "Mercédès" which Haydée repeated, with a gentle smile.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

RICHER THAN MONTE-CRISTO.

THIRTY years since, in a half Moorish, half Spanish town there lived a young girl who has been described by Alexander Dumas, in his work, entitled "The Count of Monte-Cristo," as having eyes like those of a gazelle and hair like jet. She stood crushing a flower in her beautiful hands, which like her arms seemed to have been modelled from the Venus of Arles. A young man sprang up the steps of the piazza, and pressed the kiss of an affianced lover on her lips. This girl was named Mercédès.

Many years later, in a narrow street of Marseilles, a woman with a sweet face and tearful eyes watched a ship as its white sails disappeared in the mists of the distant horizon.

On this ship was her son, her only hope, who left her in solitude, and yet this woman was not without hope. And the thoughts of her son were always accompanied by thoughts of another—of him who had bidden her hope. This woman was the widow of the Count de Morcerf, and he who had taken away her son Albert and had said *au revoir* was the Count of Monte-Cristo.

And ten years later Mércèdes still lived in that room, where she had thrown her last kisses to Albert her son, and where she had seen Monte-Cristo depart.

There are some women so privileged by Nature that age and sorrow seem to respect them, or rather time and grief give them new beauty. But for the deadly pallor on the face of Mercédès, the gay fisherman, Fernand, would have seen much of the beauty which had so crazed him, and driven him to crime. Her eyes were still bright, and in the black hair, carelessly folded around her beautiful head, there were only a few silver hairs.

Mercédès stood looking from the window, concentrating her vision on the distant horizon.

Behind her was a man small and dark, and wearing the uniform of the first battalion of Zouaves. He had a terrible scar running from his left ear across his throat which he left uncovered, seeming to take great pride in his scar, which had given him the name of Cou-Coupe which soon became Coucon, but his real name was Auguste; he was the son of a poor girl who was forced to work hard for her daily bread. Against her will and his, her son was obliged to go with his regiment to Africa, and the poor woman died two years later.

We will explain further on why Coucon was in the room inhabited by Mercédès, and motionless lest he should disturb her reverie.

This enforced quiet was not of long duration, for the door was thrown open and a hand was laid on the shoulder of Mercédès, while a sweet voice said:

"Good morning, friends."

The hand that touched Mercédès was so exquisite that a sculptor would have longed to model it. Her

voice, sweet as it was, had an odd little accent. And hand and voice belonged to a girl of eighteen, tall and slender, with golden hair, and exquisite complexion.

Mercédès turned toward her.

"Good morning, Miss Clary."

"You are always sad. You always have tears in your beautiful eyes."

"And you are always gay, and always have smiles on your lovely lips!"

"My physicians bid me be cheerful—they think me nearly dead of consumption, you know."

And she laughed.

"I surely have a right to laugh as much as I choose, but that is no reason why you should weep as much as you choose. Tears will not hasten the coming of him whom you expect."

"If he be living," said Mercédès, gravely, "this day will not pass without our seeing his sail gleam on the horizon."

"And will you not tell me who this hero is?"

"Certain names are breathed only in our prayers," answered Mercédès, solemnly.

"I have so longed to see a hero, some knight errant. You will let me see him when he comes?"

Mercédès left the window, signing to Coucon to take her place. She took the girl's hands tenderly in hers.

"You must have had some especial reason for coming to see the poor recluse to-day?" she said, with a nervous attempt at a smile.

"How unkind!" pouted the young English girl.

"Am I not always glad to come here? But you are so grave sometimes, that I fear to intrude."

"It is not gravity, child! it is despair—but you are so young that you cannot understand me."

The young girl, in spite of all her frail delicacy, had a look in her eyes that told of firmness and a chin that spoke of a strong will. For three months, Clary Elphys, for this was her name, had been living at Nice alone with her French governess, Madame Caraman, an excellent woman, and a widow of whom more anon.

Miss Elphys had been sent to the south of France by her English physicians. She was destined, it was believed, to die the slow death of consumption, and Nice, thirty years ago, was supposed to be beneficial in such cases.

Clary Elphys was immensely wealthy, having inherited an enormous fortune from an uncle who died suddenly in the East.

Lord Elphys had a son, Sir Edward, who did not share his sister's wealth, having only the impaired fortunes inherited from his ancestors. Lord Elphys, like most Englishmen, thought that money was thrown away on women, and wished that this enormous fortune was his son's, more especially because he himself had nothing to leave him except the family acres, which were entailed.

This girl was educated, or rather let alone, after a peculiar fashion. She read what she pleased, and the novels of that day were of a romantic character, where the heroes, at the close of a passionate tirade, carried their handkerchiefs to their lips to withdraw

them stained with blood; delicacy of sentiment was indicated by delicacy of lungs. Women were expected to be diaphanous envelopes, frail creatures at the best.

The first governess the young girl had, was a fair Irish woman, as sentimental and poetical as a water lily floating on the bosom of the Lake of Killarney. She taught Clary that women were angels, and should be treated as such. She inculcated no exercise, no out of door life, but a hot-house existence. And when she left Clary, the girl from having been an imaginary invalid, became a real one, and spent whole days wrapped in furs and lying back in an arm-chair.

Byron's, Goethe's and Lamartine's heroines were the models she wished to imitate.

Her father watched her with pain, thinking that her magnificent fortune was wasted upon her, while Sir Edward, his son, was robust and gay. Physicians were sent for. And to all their questions Clary answered "yes," and they left with the announcement that the girl was in a galloping consumption. The father thought it quite within the line of his duty that Clary should know this, as a preparatory step to making the will he desired.

She had signed also a number of papers when Nature made a grand effort in her behalf. A great crisis took place in her physical condition; and the physicians, hastily summoned, shook their heads as they looked at her through their gold-bowed spectacles, and decided that she must be sent at once to the sunny regions of southern France.

A governess was sought who could speak French

fluently. Madame Caraman was heard of, and sent for. She proved to be a most devoted nurse, as well as companion. Her aspect of flourishing health fairly frightened Clary.

The journey to France was very fatiguing, but Madame Caraman, who was a little uneasy about the result, was satisfied that the girl was less ill than when she started, and that when she claimed assistance in leaving and entering carriages, it was more from habit than necessity.

Madame Caraman, whose own appetite was stupendous, was startled to find how little the girl ate.

"You must eat!" she cried. "This will never do And you are not to cough except when I give you permission—three times every day!"

She laughed, and was so thoroughly good humored that Clary laughed too, and promised to try. The first slice of beef was rather a trial, but she won the victory.

They were living in a somewhat isolated villa at Nice, where there was a lovely view of the sea; a lovely place, but not very safe for two women. The servants slept in another building, and the governess alone was left with Clary.

One night Madame Caraman heard an unusual noise, something like breaking glass. She rose softly and discovered a half dozen bandits, who, in picturesque costumes but with evil intentions, were trying to enter the house. The governess snatched a pistol that she always kept on a table by her side at night, and fired through the window at the rascals, who, soon discover-

ing that they had only a woman to deal with them, broke in the door. The governess, nothing daunted, snatched a heavy candelabra and descended the stairs. The candelabra proved to be an excellent weapon, for with it she felled two of the thieves and fired her pistol at the third. One man, however, sprang at her. His murderous hands were on her throat, when a white form appeared, and in her turn fired her own pistol, almost a toy, in the face of this assailant.

It was Clary who had arrived so opportunely, and she and the governess now started in pursuit of the fleeing brigands, and aroused the servants.

"Upon my word!" said Madame Caraman, looking at Clary admiringly, "for an invalid you have done wonders! Your eyes are like stars, and you have a charming color."

From this day the girl felt the greatest confidence in her governess, and submitted to be kindly ridiculed on account of her various invalid whims.

"You are neither an invalid nor a coward!" said the old lady, "and I don't believe you are in the least afraid of death. You have been living with a simpleton, who encouraged all your vagaries. You will soon be as strong as I am!"

Clary laughed, but protested a little.

"What does life amount to?" she asked.

"To a vast deal! Ask your brother, Sir Edward. Your father, too, could, I fancy, answer this question. But let me see what I can do with it. I had an old and sick mother. I loved her, and comforted her so that her life ended gently and she knew no hardships."

Clary listened gravely.

"Then I married. Caraman was not the least practical, but he was the best of men. His courage and patience were wonderful, and during his long illness I toiled for him My little girl died, and I took care of her to the last. And now you ask what life amounts to! Let me tell you, Miss Clary, that you have both heart and energy, and that instead of dying, you will live to do much good with your large fortune. Instead of nursing your own fancied ailments, look out for the ailments of others!"

"But I never see people who are sick or poor!"

"That is true. Those who are rich like yourself are apt to be surrounded only with happy, smiling faces. If you drive, it is only through wide, fine streets, and you think that the streets you do not see are as fine as those. I know places in Paris, child, where people die of hunger and cold. You are dull because you are unoccupied. You have read silly romances, and know nothing of reality. Together we can go in this sunny land to find worthy objects of charity, and you will soon have something to do!"

Madame talked thus for an hour, and the next day her charge said to her:

"Where shall we find these poor people who are suffering?"

"At Marseilles."

"Then let us go there, and on horseback," said Clary, "for I need the exercise."

This was a little trying to Madame, who was somewhat stout; but she did not complain, and the arrange-

ments being soon made, they started. Clary was delighted at her novel experience, and soon she and her companion learned the poor quarters of Marseilles. One day they encountered a woman, who though very pale, was still handsome, but bore the traces of great sorrow. This was Mercédès. Clary was attracted by her, but felt instinctively that hers were not sorrows that could be alleviated by money. Their eyes met, and soon the ice was broken; they became acquaintances, friends.

Mercédès was sad. Her only son was fighting for France, in the terrible climate of Algiers. Letters came from him frequently; he had risen from the ranks and was now known as Captain Joliette. Clary frequently heard his letters read, and was greatly interested in the gallant soldier. Suddenly these letters ceased, and Mercédès, in her despair, wrote her laconic note to Edmond Dantes, the Count of Monte-Cristo. And now she was watching for this man, who was never deaf to the cry of distress. Suddenly there was an exclamation from Coucon.

"Madame, a magnificent yacht has entered the harbor, and the flag bears a golden mountain on a red ground."

"It is he!" cried Mercédès, her face expressing joy and intense relief.

"A carriage is on the wharf," continued Coucon "The yacht is coming up rapidly."

Coucon waited a few minutes.

"A man has landed and jumped into the carriage, and in five minutes he will be here!"

"I will leave you, friend; but I shall expect to be called," said Clary timidly, but very curious.

Mercédès smiled faintly. Clary kissed her and departed, followed by the Zouave. A carriage stopped before the door, and a man descended. He rapidly mounted the stairs and was met by a woman.

"Edmond!" she cried.

"Mercédès!" he replied.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A MOTHER.

IT was a mother who extended her hands in greeting Between these two, a barrier had long since risen, which had prevented their meeting for many years, but now the mother, in agony about her son, had asked for aid from the only person whom she believed could help her.

The Count was very pale. He was oppressed by the memories that haunted this room, where he had often seen the gay girl to whom he had dreamed of giving his name. It was also the room where old Dantes had died, where he had allowed himself to die of cold and hunger. Monte-Cristo could almost hear again the old man's slow and dragging footsteps.

"Mercédès," said Monte-Cristo, solemnly, "you have sent for me. I have come. Ask my life, Mercédès, if it will serve you. These long years have softened my anger, and pity alone remains. Let me make amends for all the sorrow I have caused you."

"Edmond, do not talk thus. I have summoned you, but it was not to impose upon you the accomplishment of duties which I do not even recognize. In spite of everything, I have never lost confidence in you, and now I know you will aid me."

Monte-Cristo, with his hand on his heart, listened to this voice which aroused so many memories; but restraining his emotion, he said, calmly:

"What has happened?"

Mercédès fell on her knees.

"Edmond!" she cried, "you know that I now have but one tie in life—my son. You will remember that he, ashamed of the name that I cannot utter without a blush, left me two years ago to go to Africa. Every week he wrote and told his poor anxious mother of each step in his wonderful career. About three months since these letters ceased. Day after day I dragged myself to the post-office, but not one word. I read every dispatch from Algeria in the newspapers, but I could learn nothing. I did not know to whom to turn. I wrote to Paris, to the Minister, but they did not condescend to answer me. One day, Monsieur Beauchamp,—you remember him?"

Monte-Cristo nodded.

"He came to Marseilles. I called on him, and then I did not hesitate to pronounce my name—the name my son had purified. Monsieur Beauchamp was kind, and promised to institute inquiries. A week later I heard the horrible truth."

"Albert was dead!" said the Count, sadly.

"No! no! Do not say that. He is not dead. He has disappeared; it is believed that he was captured by the enemy, but all trace is lost."

"This must have been before the submission of Abd-el-Kader?" said the Count, meditating.

"Yes; but wait. Monsieur Beauchamp afterward

sent me word that a Zouave then in Paris, who had served under my son, could give me some information. He sent this Zouave to Marseilles."

"Is he here now?" asked the Count, "and what did he say?"

"He is here, and he says my son is living."

Monte-Cristo stood weighing all the probabilities. He felt that an unhappy mother was hanging on his every word.

"Mercédès," he said, at last, "you have suffered terribly, and my confidence in the justice of God is so great that I do not believe He would take your son from you. Where is this Zouave?"

"I will call him," answered Mercédès, "but first tell me once more, that I may count on you."

Monte-Cristo took the poor woman's hand.

"Did you ever know me to break my word?" he asked.

"Never! never!"

"Then hear me swear that I will give my life to serve you.'

Coucon presently appeared. He stood in the doorway with his legs far apart and his eyes fixed on Monte-Cristo. He had been grumbling for some time that it was folly to wait for this man; that if the lady would allow him with several of his companions to start off in pursuit of the Captain, they would soon find him. But he had promised to wait for Madame's permission.

"My friend," said Monte-Cristo, in his rich, penetrating tones. "You love your Captain?"

"I would be willing to be cut into mince-meat for Captain Joliette; and I know that I can find him."

"But why are you so sure that your Captain has not been killed?"

"Well, Colonel—"

"I am not a Colonel."

"Excuse me, sir. The truth is, General—"

"I am neither Colonel nor General. I am not a soldier. I am merely a man, and I address a man. You love your Captain. I love him too."

Mercédès listened with her hands clasped.

Like you," continued the Count, "I believe that he is living. Will you help me to save him?"

Coucon hesitated; this man with his noble bearing and frank speech bewildered him.

He flung his cap on the floor.

"Zounds! sir," he exclaimed, "I don't know who you are, though I would have taken you for a Marshal of France; but as you say you are not, it is all the same. I am Coucon, the Zouave, and unused to fine words, but if you want me, I am your man!"

Monte-Cristo was more touched by these simple words than by the most violent protestations.

"Sit down," he said, "and we will talk over this matter."

"Not I, sir. General or not, I know my place too well to sit in your presence."

"As you please, but how and when did your Captain disappear?"

"There was an attack to be made on some of those Arabs, with faces like spiced gingerbread, and the

Captain said to me—he liked me pretty well, you understand—well, he said to me, 'Coucou, my man, if by chance I should never return, I want you to remember that I have a mother whom I adore in Marseilles.' He then gave me her name and address, and told me that if anything happened to him I was to leave, and go to his mother with a ring."

"A ring!" cried Monte-Cristo, looking at Mercédès.

She, with fast falling tears, drew a ring from her slender white finger, handed it to the Count, who with difficulty refrained from pressing it to his lips, for he instantly remembered it as the one that Edmond Dantes had given to Mercédès as a pledge of affection.

The widow of the Count Morcerf half turned away, murmuring:

"I wished him to take this talisman with him, feeling that it might bring him happiness!"

"Go on!" said the Count to the Zouave.

"I did not want to take it, for I had no fears for the Count, but he insisted, and we started off. We reached the defile in the mountains, which was the point of danger, without any trouble. There was not a cloud in the sky, nor a Bedouin on the horizon. We were looking for a cosy place to bivouac for the night and eat our suppers, when all at once came a crack. We fought like tigers, but we were beaten like dogs. I tumbled over a precipice, and I suppose I fainted."

"But the Captain?"

"Wait a bit! I recovered my senses at dawn. I felt myself all over, and found that no bones were broken, and then I thought I would look for my com

rades. I climbed up to the road above, where all was still, and found my comrades, but they were dead, and their heads, horrible to say, had been cut off. I tell you I shiver now when I think of it!"

The Zouave's face was livid.

"But," he continued, "I suddenly missed the Captain. He was not there."

A deep sigh from Mercédès interrupted this recital, which the mother had heard at least ten times. Coucon hesitated.

"Go on!" she said.

"I began to look for my captain," continued the Zouave, "but there was no sign of him nor the bandits, either. I called aloud, but was answered by jackals and hyenas. I could not save my comrades from these wild beasts, and was obliged to leave their headless bodies where they had fallen, and make my way back, expecting every moment to be attacked, but I reached the camp safe and sound. I told my story, and what do you think? I was accused of having fled and deserted my friends. They marched me back to the spot, but, sir, the wild beasts had been there, and we found only a pile of bones!"

Coucon passed his hand hastily over his brow.

"But they surely made a search for Captain Joliette?" cried Monte-Cristo. "He was taken prisoner, probably, and held as hostage to exchange for some important Arab."

"Everything was done that was possible, but not a trace! After awhile, when Abd-el-Kader surrendered, we saw a number of Arabs, whom we questioned.

There was one old monkey that I felt sure knew something."

"Why did you think so?"

"I will tell you. This creature—a Marabout they called him—came into the camp to spy about, though he pretended to be begging. I was looking at him when he was questioned about the Captain, and I saw a ferocious gleam in his eyes that told me much. It was no use to say a word to the officers. I did, and they laughed at me, but when they decided to examine the man, he had vanished."

"You learned his name?"

"It was something like Rage—"

"A Marabout, you said. Had he a bony face, and did his ears set out from his head?"

"Yes, precisely!"

"Moustache and beard cut in points?"

"Precisely—do you know him?"

"No, but these are traits of a certain tribe. But was the name you heard Radjel d'Achem?"

"That is it! That is it!"

Mercédès started to her feet.

"Be calm, dear lady. These words are not a name, they simply mean a class, not even a tribe, which is common enough in the desert of Sahara."

Mercédès buried her face in her hands, and when the Count bade the Zouave continue, the man made a sign indicating that he could say no more in the presence of the lady, and then added, aloud:

"There is nothing more to tell. I asked for leave, and came to France. I delivered the ring to the lady.

I have told all I know, but I am sure that I can find the Captain!"

"Go down stairs and wait for me. We will talk together again, and perhaps you will talk me into your belief!"

"One thing, sir—may I call you Commandant?"

"We will see. Go now and wait for me."

"Yes, Commandant, I will wait for you," said the Zouave, as he disappeared.

"I do not despair, Mercédès," said the Count. "Is Monsieur Beauchamp still in Marseilles?"

"Yes, I think so."

"I will find him, and be here again to-morrow. Keep up your courage—"

There came a knock on the door, and Clary's sweet, young voice called: "Are you alone, Mercédès?"

At a sign from the Count, Mercédès opened the door.

The girl hesitated when she saw a stranger.

"A kind friend," said Mercédès, "who sympathizes in all my fears."

The Count bowed, and pressing the hand of Mercédès, he said:

"Good-by, until to-morrow!"

Clary stood motionless, as if stunned.

"Who is that man?" she asked, in a trembling voice.

"The Count of Monte-Cristo."

"And it was for him that you were waiting?'

"Yes."

"Oh!" said Clary, pressing her hand on her heart, "some strange presentiment tells me that this man is all-powerful. Hope! Mercédès, hope!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FIND THE WOMAN.

MONTE-CRISTO found the Zouave waiting at the door. With him was Madame Caraman, who had accompanied Clary and waited without.

Coucon admired this lady immensely, and was pleased to have this brief interview with her.

"Here comes the Commandant!" he murmured.

This military title had an exhilarating effect on the governess. She held herself more erect, and then made her most profound curtesy.

"Go on with what you had to say," said the Count to Coucon. "Get into the carriage first, though."

"There was something, sir, that I did not wish to say before the lady."

"There is some woman in the matter, then?"

"Say child, and you would be nearer the truth, for she was not more than fifteen."

"And mistress to the Captain?"

"Not at all, Commandant. I will tell you. Six months before our Captain was lost, we had been out hunting some of those confounded Arabs and were overtaken by the night, and established ourselves in a ravine to wait until morning. I was on watch. I heard the most terrible noises all night, but about

two in the morning I saw a black form pass close by, and I fired. I thought it was, at least, a lion. The Captain, who always slept with one ear and one eye open, started up, and I told him what it was. The moon rose at that moment, and then we heard a strange cry. It was terrible, and seemed to come from a rock above our heads—it was like a child in agony. The Captain sprang up the rock, and presently I saw him struggling with an enormous panther. I was about to fire, but was obliged to withhold my shot for fear of wounding my Captain, and could only look on at the combat between the animal and the man. My Captain at last plunged his dagger into the creature's heart, and was saved! I ran to him—he was severely wounded on the shoulder. He pushed me aside. 'It is nothing, Coucon. Look out for the child!' I ran in the direction he pointed, and under the light of the moon saw a little creature, who was insensible and terribly wounded on the shoulders. The men came hurrying up the rocks, and assisted the Captain, while others carried down the child. The Captain thought only of her, and not of himself. I heard him say: 'God grant that I have not come too late!'"

"Noble soul!" murmured Monte-Cristo. "But who was this child?"

"Ah! sir, no one knows. She absolutely refused to give any information about herself. She was with one of the tribes we were pursuing, and had run away, hiding behind tufts of tall grass and trees, when suddenly she beheld the panther before her. He threw

her down, and she felt his claws tear her shoulder, and screamed. Thus it was that we had heard her. The Captain's wound was worse than hers. Near us was what is called an oasis—half a dozen tall sticks with a few green leaves at the top, but out of these sticks we made a litter on which we placed the Captain and the child, side by side.'

"The girl was pretty, then?"

"Zounds! Captain, she was a beauty for those who like her color. She was very brown, with a golden tint like the gingerbread my mother used to bring from the fair to me. But I never saw such eyes! They made me think of an antelope. Her name was Medji."

"After a time, the Captain asked her if she wished to return to the tribe.

"But she burst into tears and seemed to be in deadly terror. It seemed that she had not been happy with these people. But what on earth could we rough soldiers do with a little creature like that? She was not fifteen. But the Captain said to her, 'you will not tell us who your father is, which shows you are not very anxious to see him. I can not send you away, but I will be your father, and you will be my daughter.'"

"His daughter?"

"Yes. The Captain was very peculiar, you know. The child was delighted, and made every sign of submission. From that time she lived with the Captain, who gave her a woman servant, who never left her night or day."

"And what became of her?"

"Ah! that is the strange thing. When we were about starting on that last expedition, she implored the Captain not to go. She only knew two or three French words. She said she knew something would happen, but no one paid much attention to her, but we remembered it afterward."

"Afterward!"

"When I came back to camp, bringing the news of the Captain's disappearance, do you know what I heard?"

"Go on!"

"Medji had disappeared the same night, almost at the same hour."

"It was infamous treachery. This creature, whom you call a child, was woman enough to watch all that was going on, and to betray you to the enemy, and it was she who caused the death of your companions."

"I admit that there is a look of that, but—"

"But what?"

"I asked all the women in the camp, and finally heard that several Arabs had appeared there a few days before. Medji caught a glimpse of one, and was so terrified, that she ran and hid herself."

"But why did she not inform the Captain?"

"Ah! who can tell? Women are so queer. She had her own ideas, perhaps. Among the Arabs was one—I know his name—but I don't know which he was."

"And his name?"

"Mohammed-ben-Abdallah!"

"What!" cried Monte-Cristo, starting. "Are you sure that you have made no mistake?"

"Oh! I am sure."

"But you don't know the man?"

"No, but he was one of those Marabout fellows, of course!"

Monte-Cristo smiled, and shook his head. "Did you mention this man and his name to your superior officers?"

"What was the use? I could see as well as they."

Monte-Cristo looked at the Zouave.

"Then why do you tell me what you did not choose to tell those in authority over you?"

Coucon was discomfited, and asked himself why he had been led on to saying so much more than he intended. He did not yet know that it would have been impossible to keep anything back from Monte-Cristo. He answered, therefore:

"I am sure I don't know!"

The Count's eyes were fixed on the distant horizon, where lay the secret of Albert's destiny. He turned to the Zouave.

"You have seen Medji often?" he asked.

"Thousands of times, Commandant!"

"Did she have any peculiarity of appearance?"

"Yes; she had on her brow and on each of her cheeks a little cross, which I first supposed were painted, but I discovered later that they were tattooed."

Monte-Cristo started at these words.

"Coucon," he said, "this Mohammed-ben-Abdallah

is the most cruel enemy of France; he it is who means to avenge Abd-el-Kader, and take his place."

"Zounds! If I had known this sooner!"

"If Captain Joliette fell into his hands, he is lost, unless saved by a miracle. I will see what can be done. Come to me at ten o'clock."

"To the minute, Commandant!"

The Count said to himself, "Mercédès! I will yet save your son!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TRUST ONLY IN YOURSELF.

WHEN Monte-Cristo presented himself at the hôtel, and was shown into a salon on the first floor, Monsieur Beauchamp rose to greet him with extended hands.

"I am delighted to see you, Count!" he exclaimed. "I am no longer young and enthusiastic, but my friends are as dear to me as ever."

"You are changed, certainly," said Monte-Cristo.

"Changed! I should say so. Think what I have gone through!" answered the journalist.

"But you triumphed when the Republic was proclaimed?"

Beauchamp began to pace the room with rapid steps.

"Yes, that day I had an hour of very positive joy but—"

"But what?"

"Never mind! Do you know why I am in Marseilles? Merely to escape for a few days from the heart-breaking spectacle that deprives me of all my hopes and all my illusions. The Republic means simply a right to dispose of places, and the rivalry and ill-feeling are without parallel. Yes, I came here to forget, if possible, for a few brief hours. And now,

how can I serve you? I fancy I can guess, however; it concerns Madame de Morcerf."

"How can you guess that, Beauchamp?"

"Because I know you so well, and whenever I hear of sorrow I hear, too, of the Count of Monte-Cristo as consoler. I knew you were in Italy aiding the patriots to accomplish their noble deeds. When I saw her she said to me: 'Would that Monte-Cristo were here!' 'Send for him,' I replied, 'and he will come!' She wrote, and you are here!"

"You remember that I was involved in that catastrophe which led to the suicide of Count Fernand, and I have felt keen self-reproach. I cannot give you any explanations, but you will believe me when I say that in coming here I did only my duty."

Beauchamp bowed.

"This poor woman has told me how kindly you received her, and that the Zouave was sent her through you, that from him she might hear all that there was to learn of her son, whom she adores."

"He is a man of great merit," answered Beauchamp. "In spite of the confusion in all the Departments I have been able to learn a good many facts in regard to him. Albert de Morcerf, who is known in Algeria as Captain Joliette, has won the esteem of his superior officers. He entered the service as a common soldier, and in these few years he succeeded in rising several grades. He was always ready for anything, and his modesty was as great as his patriotism."

"And now he has disappeared?"

"There is some mystery in the affair. The Arabs

of the Desert rarely trouble themselves to make prisoners, but Captain Joliette certainly was not among the dead. It is very strange."

"You do not know to what tribe the Saharians belonged, who attacked this detachment?"

"Not precisely."

"One question more. Do you think that the capture of Abd-el-Kader must necessarily lead to peace in Algeria?"

"Certainly not. I am sure that a new chief will arise to resume the conflict. These people may be crushed, but they will never submit."

"I am not so sure of that!" answered Monte-Cristo, "but your judgment is correct, and this chief is already in existence."

"We have heard nothing of it at the Department.'

"As a man is the last to know of a wife's infidelity, so a government is the last to hear of matters of vital importance."

"But how did you hear this? I do not intend to ask the question, though, for I have been long aware that you have private and mysterious sources of information. I dare say you know the name of this chief."

"Yes, it is Mohammed-ben-Abdallah."

"I have never heard the name. Are you sure you have not been deceived?"

"I assure you," answered Monte-Cristo, "that within a month this man, Mohammed, will fling to the breeze a new banner of revolt."

"But I must ask one question in my turn. What

has all this to do with the disappearance of our gallant young soldier?"

"Who can say? Slender threads unite events. I have my idea, but I can't say positively as yet. But now to the real aim of my visit. You have great influence in Paris?"

"Do you want a Prefecture, my dear Count?"

"I merely ask that the Zouave shall have an unlimited leave of absence."

"I can promise that," answered Beauchamp.

"And one thing more," said Monte-Cristo, taking a check-book from his desk. "There is great destitution in Paris at present, and will you distribute this amount as you think best?"

"A million! My dear Count, but this is enormous!"

"I do not wish it to go through any official hands, but desire that you shall place it where it will do most good."

"I will obey you. But now, what do you propose to do for this poor mother?"

"Come to the window. Do you see that steam yacht?"

"I see her. She looks as if she were all ready for sea."

"She will start to-morrow, at sunrise."

"For what destination?"

"For Algeria."

"Ah! I see. You are sending out people to look for the Captain?"

"My dear fellow!" said Monte-Cristo, "when you

want a thing done quickly and well, how do you do it?"

"I do it myself!" answered Beauchamp, with a laugh.

"And I long since adopted as a device: 'Trust only in yourself!'"

"So you mean to go off yourself in search of this man? But, my dear Count, it is my duty to warn you, not that I doubt your personal courage, that the nature of this people of the Desert is beyond all else treacherous, and that you have to combat not these men alone, but their climate, the intolerable heat of the Desert, thirst, and sand."

"Ah!" said the Count, "if you knew what I had done and where I had been in my life you would not speak to me of simoons and heat. I have fought ferocious beasts with human faces, more ferocious than lions, and I have felt the hot breath of hate on my brow a thousand times more terrible than the winds of the Desert!"

"You will go, I see, but you forget the Countess and your son."

"Come to my house to-night," said Monte-Cristo, "and I will tell you more."

"To your house—to your Hôtel, you mean?"

"No," answered the Count, smiling. "I have learned wisdom since I was fined in the courts for having no domicile in France!"

"And what have you done?"

"I have a house in every large city in the kingdom, and a palace in all the capitals of France. These are

always kept in readiness for me, with a whole corps of servants."

"An excellent idea, but not of practical value to many people. I remember the fine—it was inflicted at the time of that Benedetto trial. By the way, what has become of that scoundrel? I heard he had escaped from Toulon, and you had better look out. He is one of those tigers with human faces who may be more dangerous than the wild beasts of the desert."

"This man," said the Count of Monte-Cristo, very gravely, "is the incarnation of evil. The day will come that I shall mete out his punishment, and it will not be a light one!"

"I hope not, most sincerely. And now to return to your journey. You can take the Zouave with you These fellows know Africa, and let me recommend to you now, lest I forget it later, a young fellow who ought to be somewhere in that part of the world. He went off as a correspondent from our office, and sent me excellent letters up to the taking of Abd-el-Kader. Since then, I fancy he has gone into personal adventures."

"His name?"

"An ordinary one enough—Gratillet."

Monte-Cristo wrote it down.

"And if you meet him," continued the journalist, "show him some kindness. He is brave, nervous, excitable, and adventurous."

"And to be depended upon, I suppose?"

"Most assuredly—and if you can restrain him a little you will do me a great kindness, for if I carry

out my idea of a new journal, Gratillet is indispensable to me."

"Sahara is a large place," said the Count, "but—"

"Everything is possible! Then to-night, my dear Count, I will see you again, but let me tell you that I consider you about to undertake an act of preposterous heroism!"

"Say no more," and the Count laughed, "or I shall take you with me!"

"I should not be surprised; your magnetism is something marvellous. But I must stay here in France—I am needed. The lions of the Desert are tempting though, to be sure!"

The two men shook hands and parted.

"Ah!" said Beauchamp, standing at the window and watching Monte-Cristo as he walked down the street, "Ah! if a man like that would but enter the arena of public life! He is right, though—what are politics?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE SACRIFICE.

MONTE-CRISTO had told the truth. He owned a house in Marseilles, fully equipped and kept in running order, and on the evening of which we write the Count and his wife, Haydée, were on the terrace, looking toward the sea. Tall exotics embowered the veranda, and made a tent over their heads.

It was the end of March. The evening was magnificent, and the air was heavy with the breath of flowers. The murmur of the town was but faintly heard, and the intense silence was almost solemn.

Esperance sat alone in the salon next the piazza. He was reading.

Monte-Cristo was walking up and down, with care and anxiety written on his brow. Haydée, reclining on a sofa, was watching him. Suddenly the Count stopped at her side, and Haydée lifted her beautiful eyes to his face. The Count looked from his wife to his son, whom he could see through the long window.

"Haydée," he said, "do you still believe in me?"

She was wounded and shocked at the doubt thus expressed.

"Have I not told you, over and over again, that I no longer belong to myself? You are my heart and

my conscience. Does not the slave always believe in her master?"

"But you are not a slave, Haydée, and I am not your master."

"You are my husband. Let me tell you all I feel. I saw my father betrayed and assassinated, I saw myself torn from his body and carried to a slave market, where shame and perhaps death awaited me. You appeared, and all else vanished. From that moment the whole world was comprised in you. I tell you, if you had not bought me, I should be dead now!" And she pressed her lips to her husband's hand. "I have no thought, no anxiety, except lest the day should come when you would drive me away!"

"Drive you away?"

"Deny it not, Monte-Cristo. I have read some such thought in your eyes. You are forming some plan at this moment!"

"But if it were for your happiness, child?"

"Ah! you will break my heart. Could I be happy away from you, who are nobler than all other men?"

"Haydée, as you know, I have been weak like others."

"No—you are great. You have punished the wrong doer, and God was with you. You have raised me to the position of your wife, and you have given me the ineffable joys of maternity!"

"Have you never regretted your lost liberty since you have borne my name?" asked the Count. "Have I never given you pain?"

"You have made me so happy that I doubted Paradise!"

"And if now, dear wife, I should impose on you a great sorrow?"

"I should bow my head and think of happy days to come. You should not see me shed a tear!"

Monte-Cristo pressed his lips on his wife's brow.

"Child of my heart!" he murmured, "we must separate."

Haydée started to her feet.

"Separate!"

"But only for a time, for a few months."

"Your will shall be done!" she replied, with a choking sound in her voice. "I know," she continued, "that you go to fulfil some duty that God has marked out for you."

"Thank you, Haydée."

"But where are you going?"

"To Algeria, to the Desert, to find a son for his mother, or to die, if Nature be stronger than my will."

"Why can I not go with you? I fear no fatigue, no danger, nor yet lassitude nor terror."

Her eyes turned toward Esperance.

"I forgot," she said, "a mother cannot leave her child!"

Monte-Cristo sighed; he had not yet told her all.

"You can not go with me; I will tell you why, Haydée, but it is not because a mother must always be with her son."

Haydée's eyes kindled. "Do not tell me," she cried,

"that you intend to take with you my only consolation!"

"Be calm, Haydée; the suffering I impose on you is double. I go, and I take Esperance."

"It must not be, my husband; it would kill your slave! You do not wish to take my life!"

"Have you not just said that your life belongs to me?"

"Yes, and I meant it!" She drew from her breast a dagger, with a triangular blade. "Strike me with this!" she cried. "A wound from your hand would be sweet, and dying, my eyes would rest on you and my son; but you tear out my heart when you go and take Esperance with you!"

She crouched at his feet, weeping and entreating. "It is a trial, only a trial you propose? You do not mean it!"

"Haydée," said Monte-Cristo, gravely, "I go to accomplish a destiny. Will you not bear your part of the burthen? Esperance must go with me, and if I do not take you into the desert, also, it is because that in remaining here you have a mission to fulfil."

Haydée had not risen from her knees. This beloved voice exercised such empire over her that each word was like a drop of balm. He raised her from the floor, and holding her in his arms, he continued to talk to her.

"Ten years ago," he said, "when I destroyed every vestige of the Island of Monte-Cristo—have you forgotten what I said?—my soul was troubled within me, and I made a confession to you; you bade me be at

peace You told me I had never employed the immense power entrusted to me, except to punish the wrong-doer. I heard these words, and vowed then to do more—to reward those who struggled to do well, and to be the protector of the innocent; but I forgot that when my avenging hand struck down the guilty, the innocent sometimes fell with them, and one of these innocent ones was the son of Mercédès."

Haydée listened with suspended breath, protected and controlled by the infinite calmness of his manner and words.

"I have concealed nothing from you, Haydée. I have told how profoundly I loved that woman; it was this love, betrayed and misunderstood, that strengthened my arm. If Fernand had not robbed me of Mercédès, who knows if I should have been so pitiless? I did not measure my blows, and now this poor woman has lost all and weeps for her son!"

"Her son! Ah! poor creature!" cried Haydée, pressing her hands on her heart.

"And if this son has disappeared, a victim to some terrible snare, or if he still lives, a prisoner among the savages of the desert, if he is starved and tortured, who is to blame but myself—the Count of Monte-Cristo!"

"Do not say that! you are the soul of generosity—"

"No, not of generosity. This woman, believing me dead, gave her hand, but not her heart, to a man whom she believed to be honest and true. A son was born to her; this son she adored. I appear, and to punish the father, I forget that the innocent son must suffer

for crimes which he did not commit, and to escape the shame that was heaped on his innocent head he went to Algeria."

The Count started up, and began to pace the terrace again.

"Can't you understand, child, the remorse I feel? Do not accuse me of weakness. Never is a man so strong as when he accuses himself. I have sat in judgment, and this is my sentence:

"I must save the son of that weeping mother. Am I not right and just?"

Haydée wavered. "But," she sighed, "I am also a mother, I, too, have a son!"

"And do you not wish that this son should be worthy of the title of Monte-Cristo? Esperance is ardent and courageous. I have done my best to instil into his heart vivid ideas of duty and justice. I wish to make him fearless as well. I wish him to make acquaintance with Nature in all her terrible power, and, in short, to make my son the equal of his father."

"But why may I not go with you?" cried Haydée. "You know that I am no coward."

"Your duty is here, my beloved. I leave you to watch over this heart-broken mother. You will preserve her from despair while she awaits her son."

And the Count went to the door. Opening it, Mercédès entered.

"Haydée," said Monte-Cristo, "this is she of whom I have often spoken."

Haydée advanced to meet the stranger.

Mercédès wondered at her beauty, and taking the lovely creature in her arms, she murmured:

"How lovely you are!"

Was there not a tone of regret in her voice?

"Madame," said Haydée, "I give you all I have in the world, my husband and my son!"

"Your son?"

Monte-Cristo had called Esperance, who now came running in.

Mercédès, seeing this joyous lad, could not restrain her tears.

"Madame," said the boy, "why do you weep?"

"She weeps," answered Monte-Cristo, "because her son is in danger."

"In danger?" cried Esperance. "Then why do we not go to protect him?"

"What!" said Haydée, proud and yet sad. "Would you leave me?"

"Only, mother, to defend those who are in peril."

Bertuccio now appeared.

"A soldier, sir, would like to see you."

"It is Coucon—show him in."

"But," said Mercédès, "you have not yet told me what you intend to do?"

"You shall hear presently."

The Zouave now came forward.

"Coucon," said Monte-Cristo, "I have procured unlimited leave for you."

The Zouave did not look altogether pleased. He presently murmured:

"Thank you, sir, but I like Africa."

"In that case you will perhaps accept a proposition."

"From you, sir? You have only to speak."

"To-morrow morning at dawn, I intend to start for Sahara, and to take you with me."

Coucon threw up his cap and executed a wild dance, which was not perhaps just the thing for the society he was in, but which came from his heart. He stopped suddenly.

"You are going in search of the young Captain, Commandant, are we not?"

"Yes, my good fellow."

Coucon went up to Haydée.

'Madame," he said, with a low bow, "you have a tough customer for a husband, and he shall come back strong and well."

"And here is my son; he goes with us," continued Monte-Cristo.

"And he shall be Sergeant. How would you like that, young gentleman?"

Esperance, with a laugh, answered, as he extended his hand to Coucon:

"I will do my best to win my stripes."

"Now go, Coucon, and be at the dock to-morrow at six."

"All right, Commandant."

And as Coucon ran down the stairs, he said to himself: "I have plenty of time, I will go and say good-by to her!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHERE COUCON WENT.

AT the epoch of which we write, the English, both men and women, were suffering at the hands of the caricaturist. They were always depicted in wonderful costumes, and with teeth like piano keys. At that time there were comparatively few wandering over the continent, while to-day their eccentricities attract little attention. No one would have supposed that Miss Clary, who was walking in the moonlight alone, through a garden gay with flowers, belonged to that eccentric race. She looked like an extremely elegant Parisienne. She was alone, but had not long been so Madame Caraman had been with her, and they had talked for a long time very earnestly together. Was it this conversation that caused that shadow to rest on the girl's fair brow?

Clary had spent an hour with Mercédès after Monte-Cristo's departure, and had been made the confidante of all the mother's fears.

Clary had listened intently, but said very little. Who was this mysterious person, she wondered, who was called the Count of Monte-Cristo? He was not ill-looking. Whether he were as enormously wealthy as Mercédès said, was of little consequence to this young English

girl. She only wanted to know what he would do for Mercédès. She asked her friend this question, but Mercédès only shook her head and dared not put into words the faith she had in Dantes, by which name she always thought of him. She could not allude to the past to Clary. She simply told her that Monte-Cristo was an old family friend, for falsehood, she thought, was permissible here. He was rich and powerful, courageous and kind. Clary hardly cared to conceal her annoyance at this scanty information. She felt sure that Mercédès was not telling her all, and left, greatly discontented, but hoped to hear more the next evening. Suddenly Madame exclaimed:

"Did you know that the Count of Monte-Cristo was in Marseilles?"

"Have you seen him?" asked Clary.

"No; I should have recognized him instantly, I am sure."

"And yet he left Madame Mercédès just as we arrived there."

"Do you mean that handsome young man who drove away with the Zouave?" asked the governess, hastily.

"Oh! as to the youth of the gentleman, I have nothing to say. He must be over forty, from what I hear, but I really did not look at him."

There was a little unsteadiness in the voice with which the girl uttered these words.

"How strange!" said the governess. "Where were my eyes? I ought to have known him instantly. Yet it was the Count of Monte-Cristo."

The ladies halted at the villa, and Clary, without

entering the house, went to the garden, followed by Madame Caraman. When they were seated there, the girl said, coaxingly:

"Now, tell me all you know about this Count of Monte-Cristo. Mercédès was deeply agitated. And even you look excited when his name is mentioned."

"Ah! Mademoiselle, can it be that you know nothing of him? Have you never read of him?"

"No, no; tell me his story."

"Have you never heard that there was in France a man who was a Providence to the ignorant and the dull? Who taught, while he amused?"

"I don't understand."

"Ten years ago there were millions of French people who knew nothing of the history of their own country. I, who have long been a governess, can give you little idea of the trouble I had in interesting children in the history of France. Suddenly a man who had the faculty of telling interesting tales, wove them in so skilfully with facts and details that to-day there are few people in France who have not been awake at night to read his books, which are called romances; but they are almost without exception founded on facts. For example, his story entitled 'The Count of Monte-Cristo.'"

"Do you mean that his story has been written?"

"Indeed I do. One day, my husband and I had a little tiff, and we sulked for three days. Suddenly I took it into my head to read *Les Trois Mousquetaires* aloud. It is a dramatic work, that has taught people more about Anne of Austria, Richelieu and Louis

XIV. than ever did any of those huge volumes at the Institute. Suddenly I stopped and closed my book. My husband said, 'Go on.' I replied, 'No, not until you kiss me and beg my pardon!'"

"And he did so?"

"Of course he did; and ever since then I have looked on Alexandre Dumas as a god."

"Dumas! the name is very familiar to me."

"But you have read none of his books?"

"No. But pray tell me about Monte-Cristo. I always supposed his book to be only a romance, but now I see and understand it all. Madame Mercédès is Madame Morcerf."

In another hour the fair Clary had in her hands the Story of the Count of Monte-Cristo. She devoured its splendid story and lived in its natural life. She suffered with Edmond Dantes, wept with Mercédès, adored Valentine, admired Maximilian, hated Villefort, and pitied Madame Danglars; but she was carried away with Monte-Cristo; she was thoroughly fascinated by him and could think of little else. From his past she tried to judge of the future of her hero.

She was still in the garden, and suddenly heard a noise, a singular one, on the other side of the wall. Presently she saw the face of Coucon, the Zouave, rise above it.

Miss Clary did not speak nor lift her finger, while the Zouave sprang from the top of the wall to the garden below. He then coolly walked up the patn toward the house. The evening was warm, and the windows of the *rez-de-chaussée* were open.

Madame Caraman, who had been sewing, had now fallen asleep, and Coucon stood in an ecstasy contemplating the delightful picture. In his eyes she was very beautiful, and had Coucon been gifted with a voice he would certainly have burst forth in song, but as this was not the case, he placed his two hands on his heart and raised his eyes to Heaven.

But he could not stand thus all night, so arriving apparently at a decision, he advanced to the balcony, which was only a few feet from the ground. He laid his hands on the balustrade and lightly swung himself up and over.

The governess awoke with a start, and seeing the indistinct outlines of a human form, snatched the first object near her hand, which happened to be a large basket filled with skeins of colored wools. The basket fitted Coucon like a hat, only that it came down and rested on his shoulders, and this bold invader nearly choked.

Madame was not a woman to lose her head. Her first movement had been self-protection, and her second was to go into paroxysms of laughter.

Finally she took compassion on him, relieved him of his head piece, and asked him why on earth he was there.

Sneezing and coughing, for the wool had got into his throat, Coucon managed to ask for water.

Madame eyed him for a moment, and then she evidently thought his condition required heroic measures, for she went to a closet, brought out a bottle, and poured into a glass some excellant cognac.

"Swallow this," she said to the Zouave. "Swallow this and talk afterwards!"

The Zouave sipped the nectar and was relieved.

"And now, if you please," said Madame, "tell me why you entered the house of honest people by the window?"

"Zounds! Madame, was it a window? I thought it was a door, with the steps broken away!"

"Nonsense! And you will have the kindness to depart at once by the way you came, be it door or window."

"A thousand pardons, Madame," and the Zouave bowed politely. "You have asked me why I came, and it would not be polite in me to go away without answering you."

"Then hasten."

"Madame," said Coucon, passing his handkerchief gracefully over his lips, "there are moments in the lives of Zouaves when they remember that they are men—"

"And consequently simpletons! Go on, you are quite interesting."

Coucon was not disturbed by this interruption of mingled honey and vinegar.

"I have seen women of all colors, Madame, but I assure you I never encountered one who has moved me as you have done."

Madame Caraman was a woman, but she was also shrewd. She felt that while this instantaneous passion was a compliment to her, that it must nevertheless be frowned down.

"I am forty-two," she said, (she was really forty-eight) "and I do not like such jests."

"Jests, indeed! I swear to you, Madame—"

But the governess, by a gesture, imposed silence upon him.

"Please remember that I am a respectable woman; that I never loved any one but my husband, and it is too late in the day to begin now. In entering this house as you have done, it is not me alone whom you insult. I can look out for myself, but it is the young lady who is under my charge, whom I respect and love, and whom you, sir, must also respect."

Madame Caraman said all this in a tone of good-humored raillery, which produced more effect on the Zouave than the most violent indignation would have done.

He who had braved Arabs and tigers, was now conquered by this woman, and felt like a whipped school boy.

"I will forgive you on one condition—"

"Ten or twenty, Madame!"

"You need not be so impetuous; I merely wish to know exactly what you were thinking of when you came here to-night in this way, when to-morrow morning you might have come in a proper manner."

"To-morrow morning! But there is no to-morrow morning for me!"

"Nonsense!"

Coucon's dignity was a study.

"I assure you, Madame, that I have no intention of

insulting you. I came only to say farewell—and I wanted you to say God speed to me."

"And where are you going? To join your regiment, I suppose?"

"No, Madame. I had a captain that I worshipped—the son of Madame Mercédès. He disappeared, and we are going to find him."

"And who are 'we'?"

"I am sure I don't know—a man with eyes like fire and a black beard! But we mean to find the Captain."

Had Coucon and the governess been less interested in their conversation, they would have heard an exclamation under their window.

"You mean the Count of Monte-Cristo?" said the widow.

"Yes; and now, Madame, I bid you farewell, and am sorry thus to have offended you."

The governess looked at him. She had never had a son, and it seemed to her that this was her lad going into danger and that she should never see him again.

"Stop a moment," she said, and extended her hand.

Coucon turned scarlet.

"Ah! Madame," he cried, "your kindness shall never be forgotten—it will bring me good luck."

"*Au revoir*, my boy—and may you bring back your Captain."

The Zouave with all the agility of his corps jumped down into the garden, and ran to the wall which he clambered in a moment. Sitting astride on the top, he cried out:

"*Au revoir!* dear lady."

He dropped on the other side.

"Poor fellow!" murmured Madame. "A true Parisian, hot-headed, but with a heart of gold!"

She started. A hand was laid on her shoulder. She turned quickly, blushing deeply, as if she had been detected in doing something wrong.

"Ah! Miss Clary. You saw the Zouave then?"

'Yes," answered the girl, laughing, "I saw and heard it all. He is going to Africa."

"Yes, in search of Captain Joliette, and—"

Clary interrupted her governess before she could utter the name of Monte-Cristo.

"Have you a map of Algeria?" asked Clary.

"Yes, in that atlas."

Cary opened the atlas and studied the map.

"But how do they travel in that country?" she asked.

"With camels and in caravans. The climate is terrible—sand, hot breezes, simoons and wild beasts."

"How much money have we here now?" asked Clary, whose ideas seemed to have little sequence.

The governess opened a little book lying on her writing table and consulted it.

"We have here three hundred pounds sterling."

"That is not much."

"It depends on what you wish to do; but at the banker's you have over a hundred thousand francs."

"What o'clock is it?" asked Clary.

"Nearly ten."

"And are people still stirring in Marseilles?'

"Oh! yes, until midnight.'

"Then have the kindness to order our horses saddled."

"Horses at this hour!" cried Madame.

"Yes, and pray make haste. Ten minutes to dress, and I shall be ready."

"But surely you have no intention—"

"Dear lady," interrupted Clary, "we can't talk now. I will talk to you at Marseilles, an hour later. Take the three hundred pounds with you, by the way."

What on earth did all this mean? But the governess felt that Clary's caprices came so rarely that this one should be indulged. Ten minutes later the two ladies, followed by a lacquey, rode out of the courtyard.

CHAPTER XL.

WHAT WAS DONE.

IN one of the worst quarters of Marseilles there was a *cabaret*, in front of which a man stopped. He was dressed in the costume of an English sailor. He took a small book from his pocket and studied it by the clear moonlight, and then turned toward the street at the left. He went on and on until he reached a most villainous-looking wine shop. He looked at the sign. Evidently he had found that of which he was in search. The Englishman opened the door and went in.

What a place, and what people! The atmosphere was thick with smoke. The Englishman looked about until he saw a vacant seat, then, striking the table with his hand, he called for a quart of *menotte*. *Menotte* is an infamous mixture of brandy and gin. His blow on the table disturbed the repose of some of the men about it, who had laid their heads upon it. The *menotte* was brought, but before placing it within the reach of the sailor, payment was demanded as was the custom. The sailor pulled out a well-filled purse—an unusual sight in this part of the town—and selecting a gold piece, tossed it on the table where it made a most satisfactory sound. Twenty heads were quickly lifted from the table. The man took up the money, applied it to his

tongue and tried it in several ways, then unlocking the money-drawer, behind his counter, brought a handful of silver which he counted out to the sailor.

"Keep it for yourself," said the sailor, in English.

The man, who understood him, smiled.

"Keep your money, old fellow," he replied. "I only want what I have earned."

The sailor drained every drop of the mixture, and then said, this time in French with a foreign accent:

"You refuse my money, do you?"

"Yes, I do. To-day you throw it away, and to-morrow you will want it!"

"That is nobody's business but mine. I have a right to be generous if I choose. Now, then, will you take this money or not?"

"No, I will not. And for one reason. I am richer than you."

"Are you, indeed?" And the Englishman emptied his leather purse on the table.

All the men in the room started to their feet. And the host said in English:

"Do you want to have your throat cut? Look out!"

"Do you hear that, boys?" answered the sailor. "He says that you are quite capable of killing me to steal my money."

No one spoke or moved except the host, who again returned to his counter and unlocked his money-drawer, but this time it was not silver that he took. He thought it was best to be on his guard. Presently, a Provençal, a big brawny fellow, seated himself on the edge of the table.

"All this is yours, then!" he said carelessly, to the Englishman, as he laid his hand on some of the gold.

"Yes, it is mine. I worked for it, and I got it!"

"Ah! indeed. Well, I am not in funds just now, and will oblige you by taking some of it."

His fingers closed around some of the gold pieces, but at the same moment he uttered a cry of pain. The Englishman's hand had grasped his wrist with a most formidable pressure, and the gold fell on the floor. The Provençal uttered an oath and retreated.

"Why the devil do you show your money in that fashion," he asked, "if you won't let any one touch it? only meant to borrow some, and I should return it with interest one of these days."

"No. You are a drunkard," said the Englishman, "and you shall not touch that money!"

"We will see about that!" cried the Provençal, pulling out a huge knife.

A few words uttered in *patois* brought a dozen of his friends to his aid, and they all rushed on the Englishman.

He calmly gathered the money into a pile on the table, and leaning against the wall said:

"You propose to assassinate me?"

"We mean to have half of the money!"

"You are a fool, Provençal!" And the Englishman displayed in his turn a dagger, but it was slender though long, and looked like a toy by the side of the brutal weapons of the Provençal and his men.

"You intend to prick me with a needle," sneered the

aggressor, kicking over the table, and rushing at the Englishman.

The proprietor being a prudent man did not interfere. One man had been entirely unmoved by this tumult; he sat, with his gray head buried in his hands, at a table in the corner. The eyes of the Englishman had turned several times toward this man, who sat like a statue of despair before a half-emptied bottle of brandy.

With one bound, the Provençal had leaped on the Englishman, but with a hoarse cry quickly recoiled the slender dagger had pierced his hand, gone through and through it.

"I will kill you for that!" shouted the Provençal.

The Englishman waited.

The Provençal suddenly threw his knife into the Englishman's face, but the latter caught it in his left hand, thus having two weapons instead of one.

Turning angrily, the Provençal caught another knife from one of his companions, but as he made a bound toward his adversary, the latter seized both his wrists, and giving them a strong twist, threw him half across the room.

"Kill him! Kill him!" cried the Provençal. The Englishman sprang over the table, and laying his hand on the shoulder of the man who seemed to be dreaming or half asleep, shouted loudly:

"Up with you, in the name of Mannelita!"

The man seemed to have received a shock from an electric battery. He sprang to his feet, and with an

oath struck down the ruffian who happened to be near him.

"Bandits!' he yelled, "touch not this stranger; if you lay a finger on him, I will kill you!"

This hoarse, emphatic voice seemed to exercise a strange dominion over this little crowd—even the boldest drew back.

"Be off with you!" the man cried, "or on my life, you shall all be sent to the prisons where you belong!"

"Jacopo says so! we must go!" the crowd murmured to each other, as they retreated.

The Englishman said to Jacopo: "Take that gold and throw it outside; they will pick it up."

Jacopo obeyed, and tossed the gold pieces into the dust.

The door closed, and Jacopo, pushing the bolt, returned to the man who had aroused him, and kneeling at his feet, said:

"Master, what are your orders?"

CHAPTER XLI.

MANNELITA.

WHO was this Jacopo?

Nearly twenty years before, a man exhausted by fatigue, was watching a sail-boat beating into a little bay between the Château d'If and the Tour de Planier.

This man, courageous and energetic as he was, had now lost hope. And yet he said to himself that after fourteen years spent in prison he could now be allowed to live, that he, through the power of a secret that he held, might become the master of the world.

On board this sail-boat were men; who were they, friends or enemies? In spite of his fears, he dreaded lest the boat should pass without seeing him, and wading into the sea, he shouted wildly for assistance. Suddenly his signals were answered; a voice shouting "Courage!" reached his ears. He fainted, and when he recovered consciousness he was on the small deck of the sail-boat, and heard friendly words.

This man was Edmond Dantes, the heir of Faria's secret—the escaped prisoner from the Château d'If. It was the Count of Monte-Cristo.

And the man who had jumped overboard from the Leghorn boat to save him, was a Corsican sailor named

Jacopo. It was he, too, who protected him against the suspicions of the captain of the sail-boat. Jacopo was then a handsome young fellow, with large dark eyes, that were pathetic and laughing by turns. His black hair was as brilliant as a crow's wing.

Edmond Dantes said to him, sometimes, with a laugh, "Who knows? Perhaps some day you will be captain of a boat like this yourself. Your countryman, Bonaparte, became Emperor."

Jacopo smiled in return. To be a captain was a favorite dream of his, though he placed little reliance on these words.

When Dantes was left alone on the Island of Monte Cristo for a week and saw the white sails of the Leghorn boat fade away, he swore to himself that he would never forget Jacopo. And long years after he acted. He went to Jacopo, and said to him:

"Do you remember a sailor whose life you saved, and who predicted that you would be a captain, some day?"

Jacopo colored; he remembered very well.

"I knew that sailor," continued the Count, "and he has requested me to pay the debt he owed you."

"I don't understand—"

"You often dream of being captain of a sloop, don't you?"

Jacopo nodded.

"Very well, you shall be just that."

"Pray don't ridicule me, sir!"

"I am not ridiculing you. Do you see that yacht

out there? Well! that yacht is mine, and I make you its captain!"

Jacopo was wild with joy, and for many years the yacht of Monte-Cristo spread its white sails on many seas.

Finally the day came when the Count of Monte-Cristo went to Paris to execute justice, and Jacopo received his *congé*, or at least his liberty.

"Master," he said to the Count, "are you displeased with me?"

"No, Jacopo, by no means, but it will be a long time before I am on the sea again."

"Very well, sir, but you know whenever you want me you have only to make a sign."

"And now, Jacopo," said the Count, taking out his pocket-book, "you have a secret—"

"I, sir!"

"Come, no falsehoods. Do you not know that I have but to look into your eyes, as I do now, to read all the secrets of your soul? I read a name—a woman's name."

Jacopo started.

"Master! master! say no more; it hurts me!"

Monte-Cristo became very grave.

"Jacopo, to whomsoever gives me his confidence I am kind and indulgent, but if any one seeks to deceive me I am pitiless. If you choose you need tell me nothing, but in that case we are strangers forever more."

The strange ascendency exercised by Monte-Cristo

over all about him was such, that this threat of a separation was the most terrible he could utter.

Jacopo fell on his knees.

"Go on, master; say what you will."

Monte-Cristo laid his hand on the sailor's crisp curls

"Child!" he said, in his grave, compassionate voice, "you love, and you are unhappy."

"Ah! master, you know all then?"

"Let me tell you what I know. In Catalonia there is a family of fishermen who, from generation to generation, have braved the perils of the deep. They have amassed a great fortune. There are eight children—seven sons and one daughter, who is very lovely, with hair curling over her brow like a child."

"Mannelita!" murmured Jacopo.

"On this girl you have, for a long time, centred every hope. You went to her father—"

"And he drove me away!" cried Jacopo.

"Not so; he only said, Mannelita cannot be yours because you are poor. But did he say nothing more than that?"

"Yes; he said, 'my boy, when you can come here with two million crowns in your pockets you can have Mannelita.'"

Jacopo laughed heartily, as he looked down on his empty brawny hands.

"Take this," said Monte-Cristo, after writing a few words on a leaf which he tore from his note-book.

Jacopo looked at the paper, and then at the Count.

"What is this?" he said.

"You can read, surely?"

"Yes, and I see a check for twenty thousand francs, signed by your name."

"Very well, go to the banker's and get it cashed."

Jacopo regarded this as a commission.

"And shall I bring the money to you here?" he asked.

"To me? No, I have nothing to do with it."

"What then, sir?" asked Jacopo.

"You will take it to Mannelita's father, and you will remind him of his words, and claim his daughter."

Jacopo was fairly stunned by these words, and could not speak.

"My friend," said Monte-Cristo, "good and evil deeds bear their fruit, even in this world. You did a noble act when you saved my life; that act has borne its fruit. Take this money, you have earned it."

"Oh! sir. I have been most liberally paid on the yacht!"

"For your work, I dare say; but your devotion and fidelity have not been recompensed, and though I give you this money, I am still your debtor."

"Twenty thousand francs," murmured Jacopo.

"Yes, and what are they? I could give you twenty times as much, but to what end? I should only cause you sorrow. Now you will be comfortable; you can lead the life you like, and marry the woman you love! Go and be happy."

Jacopo kissed the hand of the Count.

"In exchange for this money," said the Count of Monte-Cristo, "I have one thing to ask."

"Name it, sir."

"It is, when I come back, some months hence, that you will not refuse to go with me."

"Refuse? Oh! master, does not my life belong to you?"

"No; from this moment it belongs to Mannelita Make no further protestations, make no promises, for you will not keep them. In six months or a year the idea of leaving Mannelita will be anguish. I know men—and I know you!"

Jacopo colored, for in his heart he knew that the Count's words were true.

"Swear, then, Jacopo, whatever the hour or the day, that if I call you you will leave Mannelita and come to me."

"Master, I swear!"

Mad with joy, Jacopo at once started for the village where Mannelita resided, and when the angry father questioned the audacious lover, Jacopo showed him the gold. In a month the marriage took place, in the little church.

All seemed to succeed with Jacopo. He bought a boat and fished with the seven brothers, and at night, when he returned, he was met by Mannelita in her holiday garb. Jacopo was happy as the day. One night the Count of Monte-Cristo appeared.

"Will you go with me?" he asked.

Jacopo did not dare refuse. But the Count understood, and would not disturb his happiness; he therefore simply entrusted him with the note to Valentine and Maximilian, which bore his adieux, and then departed with Haydée on the Alcyon. Jacopo followed

the white sails with faint regret. It seemed to him that Mannelita, about this time, began to change; but how, he could not tell. She was as fair and loving as of yore.

Time passed on. How did Jacopo learn the truth? From a word dropped—from a tear and a sigh, from various trifles that made one mighty whole—he learned that Mannelita was false. When he saw her smile on another, as she had smiled on him, his veins froze. His rage was so intense that he was perfectly calm. He questioned himself. Had he neglected his wife in any way, had he refused to gratify any one of her innumerable caprices? No, he had been too indulgent to this traitress.

All this time, Mannelita was tender and loving to him, and he took a terrible resolution. His boat, the Mannelita, was one of the most beautiful on the Mediterranean, and Jacopo loved it next to his wife; but he resolved to sacrifice both. Jacopo had strange caprices at this time. He thought he hated his wife. He stole her ribbons, and in some secret place hacked them into bits, muttering, as he did so:

"It is hers—all that is hers shall perish!"

He did not know himself why he did this. One morning, Jacopo said to his wife:

"The weather is fine, will you go sailing with me?"

She hesitated. She probably had a rendezvous with the other. Paolo was his name. Jacopo understood this hesitation. It seemed to him that fiery claws were tearing his breast. He smiled, nevertheless, because it was part of his plan to smile.

"Oh! we shall not be alone," he said, for he, too, had become a traitor. "Paolo will go with us."

At the last moment he hesitated; but he had been in Monte-Cristo's school, and when these two braved him, and only waited until his back was turned to exchange their base kisses, his wavering resolutions were confirmed.

They all went down to the boat; Jacopo went first, carrying the nets. He did not look around, lest he should see Mannelita's hand in Paolo's. They reached the boat, and Jacopo saw the letters painted red upon it, Mannelita, and it seemed to him that they were written in blood. Mannelita stepped lightly on board. How pretty she was! The land breeze sent the boat swiftly on, with every sail set. Suddenly Mannelita exclaimed:

"Look, Jacopo, a gust of wind is coming up!"

He shrugged his shoulders carelessly, and was so undisturbed that his wife said no more. She looked at Paolo, who smiled reassuringly; but the clouds became darker and heavier, the lightning flashed, and the thunder roared. Mannelita fell on her knees; but Jacopo stood with folded arms, looking at Mannelita. His manner was so strange that his wife was more terrified than by the storm. Sail after sail was carried away, for Paolo dared do nothing except under Jacopo's orders.

"Jacopo!" he finally cried, "we are lost!"

"Jacopo! save me!" exclaimed Mannelita, crossing herself.

Jacopo laughed, as he picked up a hatchet from the

deck and began to cut away the mast. His companions said nothing, they waited for Jacopo to save them. Then he went to the bowsprit and hewed that off. Mannelita in her terror ran to Paolo, and throwing herself in his arms, cried:

"Save me! Save me!"

Paolo, frightened at her imprudence, tried to put her from him. Jacopo, in the meantime, was deliberately cutting a hole in the side of the vessel, which frail as it was and tossing now at the mercy of the sea and the wind, was yet their only hope. Paolo rushed to Jacopo.

"You are mad!" he shouted.

But Jacopo seized him, threw him down, and with his knee on his chest, shouted:

"Mannelita, be happy! You are about to die with your lover!"

When Jacopo rose Paolo was dead, and Mannelita had been washed overboard. How did it come to pass that Jacopo was thrown on the shore? He never knew, for when he was found he was mad. No one suspected the truth. The gale had been so sudden and so violent that many boats had been lost, and Jacopo was greatly pitied. He went every morning to the shore, and sat looking at the sea, as if waiting for something. One day a sail boat went down in a gust a few feet from shore. Jacopo sprang into the water and saved two sailors and a woman. But when the woman lay outstretched on the sand, he looked at her, shivered, and said aloud:

"No, it is not she!"

He thought he was saving Mannelita; but from this

time Jacopo wandered on the sea shore, and scarcely a week went by that he did not save more than one life. He was regarded with superstitious awe, for he seemed to scent danger as a dog scents game—he was always near if any vessel was in danger, or any bathers drowning. He began to drink, and when under the influence of liquor, he was sane—his memory returned, and he was in torture. It was this man—this guilty man—whom Monte-Cristo had aroused with his cry of, "Up with you! In the name of Mannelita!"

"Jacopo," said the Count, when they were alone together, "you have suffered terribly."

The sailor gave one despairing sob; this was answer enough.

"I left you happy with Mannelita," said Monte-Cristo. "Did you kill her, Jacopo?"

The man started.

"Who told you?"

"Do you not know that I can read your soul? Do you repent?"

"I can't say—I was mad then, I am so no longer; but I think I was better off when I could not remember. I wish," continued Jacopo, "that I had the courage to kill myself. Take pity on me, master, take pity on me!"

"Jacopo," said the Count, in a gentle, caressing voice, "do you not know that it is to save you that I am here now? When a man, carried away by passion, commits a crime, there is but one atonement that he can make."

"And what is that, master?"

"To do all the good he can."

"But he cannot restore life."

"Jacopo, Death and Life are nearly allied. I have just tested you. I came to this infamous place for your sake. I showed my gold, I rattled it on the table, in order to see that you were still honest and incorruptible."

"Oh! I am an honest man," said Jacopo, with a shrug of disdain.

"I know it. You are just what I left you, ten years ago. Come with me!"

Jacopo drew back.

"How can I go, master? I cannot leave the place where—she died—"

"I have come for you, Jacopo. I need you. I am about to undertake a matter in which there is great danger. I rely on you."

Jacopo's hesitation vanished.

"Forgive me," he murmured. "I am ready. When shall we go?"

"At dawn. Be on board the yacht at anchor in the harbor. I rely on you. And, Jacopo, do your best. I bid you hope!"

Monte-Cristo left the *cabaret*.

CHAPTER XLII.

RAPID MOVEMENTS.

WE left Miss Clary galloping at ten o clock at night on the road to Marseilles, followed by her governess and a lacquey. Madame Caraman was devoured by curiosity to know what her young charge contemplated. She had every confidence in her, but at the same time she fully realized her own responsibility. She enjoyed in a measure this adventure, for one cannot read Alexandre Dumas without imbibing a certain amount of romance. Finally they reached Marseilles and drew up before a magnificent building in the Rue de Noailles.

"Ah! we are going to Mortimer & Co.'s; but surely you know, child, that the bank is closed at this hour?"

Clary, who did not seem to hear this remark, called John. Being an English servant, his name was of course John. The building before which they had stopped was calm and stately, as befitted Britannic Finance.

"John, have those doors opened," said Clary.

John, who knew his duty—that of passive obedience—began to pound on the door.

"They are dancing within!' said the governess. "I can hear the music."

In fact, from the long windows of the second floor, through the triple defences of blinds, curtains and shades, came puffs of music. The porter, in the meantime, had opened the door, and Miss Clary called out:

"Say to your master that I wish to see him."

"The office is closed," answered the inexorable functionary. "Come to-morrow at ten o'clock."

And he was about to shut the heavy door, but John, at a sign from his mistress, placed himself in the aperture.

"My good man," said the heiress, "you hear me. Go at once and beg your master to come down."

"Have you come to the ball?"

"Ah! there is a ball, then?"

"Yes, Madame; my master marries his daughter to-night. If you have come to the ball, of course— "

"No, I have not come to the ball."

"Then, Madame, I cannot permit you to enter."

"You refuse to obey—"

"I am obliged to do so, my lady."

"Very good; then I shall act for myself."

At a sign from his mistress, John pushed the door wide open and Miss Elphys dashed into the vestibule, followed closely by her governess; and now, amid the crowd of lacqueys in this vestibule, brilliant with lights and flowers, were two magnificent horses prancing on the marble floor.

The whole English colony were upstairs dancing, while this extraordinary scene was going on, but they were to be quite as much startled as the lacqueys below before this adventure was over, for presently a

portière was drawn aside and the head of a horse appeared. The servants had done their best to resist this invasion, but Clary lightly struck their extended hands with her whip and then excited the animal she rode to ascend the low, covered stairs. Madame Caraman, who knew her duty, swiftly followed, so that a second head soon appeared just behind the first horse.

"Mr. Mortimer, if you please," said Clary, lifting her hat as she spoke.

Mr. Mortimer was a man who took life seriously. He had spent many years behind a grating at work over figures. He had immense wealth, had been Lord Mayor of London, and was marrying his daughter! Think of a man like this seeing two horses enter his ball-room! In addition to this, Mr. Mortimer was terribly afraid of horses. Hearing his name he did not dare advance, while the young ladies fled like frightened chickens.

"Mr. Mortimer!" repeated the heiress.

The banker advanced; he was very near-sighted.

"Really," he stammered, "this is a little too much! Who could have permitted—"

But at this moment he discovered to whom he was speaking, and forgetting that it was his duty to repel this invasion of his home, and remembering only that the lady was the daughter of an English member of Parliament, and herself the mistress in her own right of an enormous fortune, he bowed low and said most graciously:

"You desire to speak to me, my lady?"

"Yes, sir, and on business that admits of no delay!"

"I am entirely at your service, if you will kindly follow me to my office."

Now, to follow a man to his office on horseback through a succession of salons is a somewhat difficult thing to do. Clary smiled and said:

"Have the kindness to assist me to dismount."

"Certainly."

The heiress leaped lightly to the floor; her governess followed, but not as lightly.

"And now, pray send for my man," said Clary, "that he may take the horses down to the court-yard."

The banker meekly obeyed, and led the way to his private office, and offered his eccentric visitor a seat.

"Well, Mademoiselle, what can I do for you?"

"I want money first."

"How much?"

"Two hundred and fifty thousand francs.

"You can have it as soon as the bank opens in the morning."

"I want it to-night."

"The bank is closed."

"Open it then!"

"The rules of my house do not permit."

"Modify those rules for this occasion. I assure you, Mr. Mortimer, that if you cannot oblige me to-night I shall to-morrow transfer my account to Mr. Bradwood."

Bradwood was Mortimer's rival, and to lose a client like this would be a terrible mortification. Mr. Mortimer, therefore, wrote a brief note, and ringing his bell, said to the servant who appeared:

"Take this to Mr. Edwards."

Mr. Edwards was the son-in law.

"You shall be obeyed, my lady," said Mr. Mortimer. "And now what else can I do?"

"Very little more," answered the girl. "I start to-morrow morning for Algeria."

"Fine country that!" answered Mr. Mortimer.

The governess listened with all her ears.

"Or rather," said Clary, "I start at dawn."

The governess caught her breath. What did all this mean?

"I doubt," said the banker, "if any vessel leaves to-morrow. I am inclined to think—"

"That none goes," interrupted Clary. "And that is precisely why I came to ask your aid. You know this port and its sailors. Can you not find me something?"

"I really do not understand," answered the bewildered banker.

"I mean simply that you must find me some ship to take me to Algeria."

"You want to buy one?"

"Yes; with captain, pilot, and sailors all on board. It must be ready for me in five or six hours, and in the harbor of Marseilles. I give you five minutes for reflection, my dear Mr. Mortimer."

The poor banker was entirely bewildered. A ship, captain, sailors, etc., at eleven o'clock at night, when the bank was closed, and his daughter waiting his presence at her marriage festivity.

"The five minutes are gone," said the young lady, rising.

Madame Caraman thinking, to her great joy, that this mad project had fallen through, laid her hand on the door to open it, but Clary said, coldly:

"I will not disturb your cashier, I can easily find elsewhere what I want."

"But my lady," sighed Mortimer, "what you ask is simply impossible."

"I know no such word as impossible," said the young heiress, now outside the door.

"Miss Elphys! pray come back!" cried the banker.

"What is it?" asked the young girl, returning to the room.

"I merely wish to say, that perhaps—"

"Ship, pilot, captain and crew?"

"Yes, yes; all are as easy as one."

"And at dawn to-morrow?"

"Yes, yes; I will see to it!"

The governess heard this, and could not believe her ears. Was Mortimer really going to aid in this folly? She flew back to the room.

"My dear sir," she cried. "It is impossible for me to countenance such madness. I could not answer for it to Lord Elphys, and I distinctly object."

Miss Clary with a pretty girlish laugh flung her arms around her friend's neck, and Madame was conquered.

At this moment, a tall, thin gentleman appeared. This was the son-in-law.

"This is the amount you require," he said, as he laid before Mortimer a pile of bank-notes.

"They are good in Algeria, I suppose?" asked the young lady.

The two Englishmen looked thunderstruck at such a sacrilegious question.

"And now," said Mortimer, "one more thing Wharton is in the ball-room?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then tell him to come to me at once."

"He is dancing."

"Stop him, then."

The son-in-law recognized the necessity of obedience, and departed.

"Who is this Wharton?" asked the heiress.

"He is, I am sorry to say, an adventurer, but the only man whom I know that is capable of leaving a ball-room at midnight to attend to a ship. But he will make you pay heavily."

The girl smiled with contempt.

"Do you think, sir, that I have not money enough to pay Mr. Wharton?"

"By no means! You can employ a hundred Whartons, if you choose."

"And he will do all I demand?"

"His conscience has no other limit than his purse, and his purse is large."

"That is certainly the man I want, and now, sir, I desire to give you a power of attorney, and also to make my will, in case I should never return."

In a low voice she gave her instructions. The banker wrote them down, and she signed the paper.

"Here is Mr. Wharton," said the son-in-law, coming in.

W th him was a person in a blue coat and brass

buttons, who would never have been taken for a diplomat—a perfect Colossus, with red beard and hair, enormous hands and equally enormous feet, the latter in patent leather boots.

"Ah! this is the gentleman?" said Clary, with a look of curiosity. "You are not English, sir?"

"No, Miss; I am an American, from Baltimore."

"It is for you, my lady, to tell Captain Wharton what you desire."

"Pray, sit down, sir," the young lady said politely to the American.

"No, Miss, no—it is my duty to be always on my legs!"

"Very good! You have a ship now in the harbor?"

"I should say so, indeed! The Crocodile—a wonder!"

"And it belongs to you?"

"Body and soul!"

"How much did it cost you, Captain?"

"What did it cost me? That is an odd sort of question!" And the Captain looked at the banker, inquiringly.

"I am rich, very rich!" said Miss Elphys, rising. "I have a proposition to make, and I wish you to be thoroughly satisfied with your part of the transaction. I modify my question. For what sum would you sell the Crocodile?"

"But the Crocodile is not for sale. Give up the Crocodile! I would die first!" And the Captain, who was somewhat excited, raised his voice in an unbecoming way.

"I will give you one hundred thousand francs, one hundred and twenty thousand, one hundred and fifty thousand!" bid the young girl.

"A very good bargain for you, Captain!" said the banker.

"And you shall not be separated from your dear Crocodile, for as soon as it belongs to me, I shall make you Captain," said Clary, with a smile.

"I accept, Miss! I accept! Only, business is business. When shall I receive the money?"

"At once!"

"Then let us shake hands on it."

The girl looked frightened. She hardly dared trust her slender fingers in that gigantic hand, but with quiet resolution she finally laid her pretty hand in that of Captain Wharton, who looked down upon its minute whiteness much as a good-natured elephant might have done.

"And now, Captain, you will be obliged to hasten."

"Yes, Miss, but there is some divine brandy in—"

"I dare say, but Mr. Mortimer will, I am sure, send some few bottles of it on board our vessel if I ask the favor at his hands. At what hour does the sun rise?"

"At thirteen minutes past seven."

"Very good! At seven o'clock and fourteen minutes you will start!"

"Agreed! but this is a droll sort of affair. We shall have eight men on board, and I am the smallest of them all!" He already idolized this little lady who was so imperious. He only wished that she was an American

"And where are we to go?" he continued.

"To Algeria. But there is one thing I wish you to understand. Have you noticed a yacht in the harbor—its flag is a golden mountain on a red ground?"

Wharton sniffed the air disdainfully.

"Yes, I have seen it—a ridiculous looking nutshell. It is called the Alcyon. If I had a son, I should like to give it to him to sail in the bath-tub!"

"This toy, Captain, starts at dawn, and goes to Algeria. I wish you to find out to what port, and wherever it is, you must make that port before the yacht. Is it possible?"

"Possible!" cried Wharton, "of course it is!" He spoke as if deeply wounded by the doubt implied.

"Then, remember, seven o'clock!"

When the English girl took leave of Mortimer, she said to him, with a smile:

"Let us hope that my good brother will not soon come into his inheritance!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

PARTING.

MERCEDES and Haydée were seated in a most exquisite room, while Esperance lay on a rug at their feet. Tears were in the eyes of both these women, for both were thinking of their loneliness and the loss of their sons. As the hour approached when Esperance was to leave Haydée, the anguish she felt was almost intolerable. What did it matter to her whether Albert de Morcerf were living or dead? It was impossible that Monte-Cristo's duty should take him to that wild country. And Mercédès, who read this poor mother's heart, had been again and again on the point of saying: "I relinquish everything. Monte-Cristo must not leave you to look for my son!" But Mercédès, as in a vision, beheld her own son a prisoner, tortured and miserable, but still alive, and she had not courage to speak.

Esperance was dreaming. In his childish brain new thoughts had sprung to life. He loved his mother, and this separation wrung his heart, but his father was glorious in his eyes, and exercised a great fascination over him.

The clock struck six. Both mother and son started as Monte-Cristo entered. Never, perhaps, had that

noble face expressed such serene solemnity. Monte Cristo was obedient to his destiny, and bowed before a will stronger than his own.

Esperance ran to meet his father, who kissed him tenderly on his brow.

"Are you ready, my son?" he asked.

"Yes," said Esperance, tossing back his head with a graceful movement of boyish audacity, "I am ready to go, father, wherever you lead the way!"

Haydée turned her face aside to conceal her tears.

"Have more courage, dearest," said the Count, taking her hands. "After all, I am not going so far away. In a few hours I shall land on the Algerian coast."

"If I only knew when you would return!" his wife murmured.

The Count turned to Mercédès.

"You see, Madame," he said, "the sacrifice I make to my duty. Care for my Haydée, and be a sister to her!"

Mercédès put her arms around the fair creature.

"I swear never to leave her!" she replied. "And now one word. If the Countess objects to your departure, relinquish the plan."

"You hear, Haydée!" said Monte-Cristo, "speak—what am I to do?"

A glow of self-sacrifice illuminated Haydée's glorious face.

"Go, my husband!" she replied with a steady voice, "and, my son, be worthy of your father!"

"Oh! Madame from my heart I thank you!" cried

Mercédès. "Now, I know that I shall see my son again!"

The Count now made his last preparations. He selected the arms on which his experience had taught him to rely, and as the sun rose above the horizon a boat left the dock, bearing the Count and Esperance to the Alcyon. There they were met by Jacopo, who looked ten years younger than on the previous evening.

"How many men have you?" asked Monte-Cristo.

"Ten, Master, and they have all been to Africa."

"Honest and courageous?

"I will answer for them."

"Ah! Coucon, you are punctual." And the Count smiled on the Zouave.

The Alcyon was an American yacht, and worthy of its name, although Wharton had spoken of it as a nutshell.

The heavy Crocodile was just going out of the harbor. Wharton was pacing the deck rubbing his hands with glee, feeling very sure of his victory.

Monte-Cristo gave the signal for departure just as the clock struck seven, and the Alcyon started like an arrow.

As long as the land was in sight Monte-Cristo stood on the deck, thinking of the perilous task he had undertaken, and of various plans. And then he called his son, and the two went down into the cabin. They had been talking there for an hour, when Monte-Cristo heard a loud noise on deck. The Count rose, for he insisted on the severest discipline among his sailors. He opened the door of his cabin, and at that moment a heavy mass rolled down the steep stairs.

It was Coucon, holding by the throat a most singular looking person. This man was in rags; his face was excessively thin, his skin dark, his hands like claws, and his feet bare. Such was the individual whom Coucon was himself.

"What is the matter?" asked the Count. "This is very extraordinary behavior, Coucon!"

"I know that, sir, but it could not be helped. Just look at this fellow!"

Monte-Cristo examined the man attentively. "Where did you find him?"

"Down below, sir, hidden in the engine room."

The Count frowned. In spite of the man's rags, there was a certain air of dignity about him.

"Who are you?" he asked. "Whence come you?"

The man was silent.

Then the Count, in the purest Arabian tongue, repeated his question.

"I am a poor man."

"How did you come here?

The Arab shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

Monte-Cristo watched him. Under this air of indifference he detected the most profound dissimulation. Who was this man?

It might be, to be sure, that the fellow had only hidden in the yacht, hoping not to be discovered until they reached the African shore. This was a reasonable supposition, and yet Monte-Cristo did not altogether accept it.

"How came you to be in France?" he said to the Arab, who stood with folded arms before him.

"I went there in one of your ships."

"How long ago?"

"Woe to him who counts the days and the hours!"

"Why did you not ask permission to come on board the yacht?"

"Ask permission!" repeated the Arab, haughtily.

"Suppose I should put you in a boat, and leave you in the middle of the ocean?"

"Allah is great!" was the reply.

Coucon understood enough of the language to seize the replies of this mysterious person, and was now quite ready to drop him into a boat, as the Count had suggested. He took a step forward, but Monte-Cristo stopped him with a gesture.

"Man," he said, to the Arab, "you have done wrong, but I understand the duties of hospitality. Here you are at home and as safe as in your own tent. Go!"

Then, turning to Coucon, he said: "This man is my guest; let his person be sacred to you."

The Arab's face was unchanged; bowing low, he turned toward the stairs.

"Your name?" asked the Count.

"Maldar."

"You said you were poor, but your name signifies riches!"

"He whom Allah protects is rich!" said the Arab, in guttural tones.

"I shall keep a good watch over you!" thought Coucon. "I don't like your looks or your ways."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE SECRET.

MOST girls would have been bewildered by this sudden determination to start on a long journey at seven o'clock in the morning, but Miss Elphys was not made of such metal. She was of that type depicted by Walter Scott when he drew Diana Vernon, and her frail form and delicate face concealed immense energy. She made all her preparations without a moment's delay, after their return to the cottage.

Her governess murmured rebelliously. "What was the sense," she asked, "of leaving this charming climate, and these comfortable quarters, to go to a land of monkeys!" This epithet she applied to men as well as animals, for she called all Arabs monkeys. She had seen many in Marseilles. But to these observations she received no reply, as Clary was too busy to talk.

A dozen enormous trunks were brought in, and books, maps, revolvers, dresses, and linen, were packed in them with amazing quickness.

At four o'clock Clary rang for John, who had been told not to go to bed, but who had no idea of what was going on, and would not have trespassed so far as to ask a question.

John appeared, dignified and solemn.

"John," said Clary, "have the travelling carriage brought down."

"Yes, my lady."

"Have these trunks put on."

"Yes, my lady."

"Then we will go to Marseilles."

"Yes, my lady."

"The coachman will come back here; you will go with me to Algeria."

"Yes, my lady."

"As you may have some preparations to make, I will give you five minutes."

"Very well, my lady."

Had he been told that the party would start in fifteen minutes he would have replied in the same tone and words.

The horses were heard in the court-yard in a few minutes.

"You are really in earnest, then?" said the governess, moved to make one last appeal. "Do you know that I feel I am doing wrong in yielding to this caprice?"

As the young girl made no reply, she fancied that these words had produced some effect, and she continued energetically:

"If anything should happen to you it would kill me. Ah! dear child, reflect a little; wait only twenty-four hours, and if you are still resolved to go, I will make no further objection."

Clary put her arms about her neck.

"No, no, my child, that won't do; no coaxing. Answer me, and say you think I am right."

"You are always right, dear friend, and yet—"

"And yet you always do as you choose, without listening to me. Suppose I refused to go with you?"

"You would simply give me a great deal of trouble. Listen to me: I am my own mistress, and I have a large fortune; I am brave, and I am strong, and yet I have no interest in life."

And she sighed deeply.

"Who loves me?" she murmured, under her breath. "But," she continued, shaking off her depression, "if you will be good, kind and sympathetic now, I shall feel like a different creature, for I am going to Algeria to help in a good work."

Madame looked up quickly, and Clary continued:

"Mercédès mourns her son; I long to aid in this work of deliverance. Think of the joy that would be mine if I should see this mother embrace her son again, and feel that I had my share in his restoration."

The governess did not speak, and Clary was more impressed by her silence than she would have been by openly expressed disapproval, and exclaimed:

"You do not look as if you understood me. I tell you that I am of no use in the world; that I see all about me men who spend their lives in struggling against Fate, in defending the good and punishing the bad, and I desire to imitate them; that is all. Am I wrong?"

"By 'these men,' you simply mean the Count of Monte-Cristo."

The girl started, but truthful as the day, she replied:

"Yes, it is Monte-Cristo whom I wish to imitate."

"To the extent of following him into the deserts of Africa?"

"Where he goes to do good, I will follow!"

Madame watched the girl with a smile of pity.

"There is nothing to be said, I plainly see," she replied, after a long silence.

Clary burst into tears, and hid her face on her friend's shoulder. Why did she weep? A young girl's nature is a psychological mystery.

Madame drew her closer to her breast and pressed a tender kiss on her brow.

"My child," she said, "take care!"

Then rising hastily, as if afraid of saying more, she called John, who instantly opened the door.

"The barouche is ready, my lady."

"Come," said Madame, "and remember that I shall never leave you night or day, but shall be always near to guard you, my child."

Clary held up her sweet face for a kiss.

The trunks were put on, and the carriage was driven rapidly toward Marseilles. No one spoke. Madame was thinking.

"I am not twenty," she said to herself, "but I know very well what is going on in that child's head, and I am afraid that were I some years younger I, too, should be in love with the Count of Monte-Cristo.'

Had she discovered the young girl's secret?

CHAPTER XLV.

AMERICANS.

JAMES WHARTON, of Baltimore, was not one of those men who call white black. He was as honest as the day and his word could be relied upon.

When the English girl arrived on the dock a half hour before sunrise, she saw a group of giants awaiting her. They were all Americans, broad-shouldered, deep-chested. They advanced to meet her with the regular step of Prussian soldiers on parade. Wharton, with his glazed cap in his hand, opened the carriage door.

"We are punctual, my lady," he said.

"I was sure you would be. See that my luggage is sent on board, and pray do not let it be handled roughly," she added, with a glance at the eight gigantic sailors.

"Where is your wife?" asked Clary of Captain Wharton. "I thought she was to be here."

"Many thanks, my lady; you will see her. She is the best of women. She was a widow when I married her—"

"Ah! Indeed?"

"Yes; I had eaten her husband," said Wharton, carelessly. He added, with a sigh, "He was an excellent fellow!" And he extended his hand with the

grace of a gentleman of the old school to assist the ladies from the carriage. In her astonishment the girl mechanically accepted this attention and postponed her questions. Madame Caraman had not heard these strange words; she was busy watching the sailors as they shouldered the boxes without a shock or a jar.

Miss Elphys gave her coachman her last instructions. He was to remain at the cottage with her other servants and await her return.

As the party went on board, Clary saw a gold-colored flag flying.

"Are those the colors of the Crocodile?" she asked.

"No, my lady," answered Wharton; "but as our Commandante has hair the color of gold, I thought she would permit me."

Evidently Wharton was twin brother to Raleigh, who spread his mantle for Queen Elizabeth to walk upon.

"A fine ship, is it not?" asked Wharton, proudly.

"And fast?" inquired Clary.

"Goes like the wind, my lady!" answered Wharton.

A tall figure advanced to meet the party.

"My wife," said the Captain, with dignity.

Never was there so strange a looking person. Her sharp features were brick color; her hair, as black as night, closely curled, was drawn up on the top of her head; an enormous mouth, with thick lips, showed large, sharp teeth; the nose seemed to be stretched out of shape, and was pierced at the tip; in her ears were large gold rings. Her costume added to the singularity of her appearance. It was a long, loose garment,

fastened into the waist by a gold rope; the collar was very open and displayed a thin black throat. We must here state that this person, who answered to the name of Minnie, was the best creature in the world. Minnie politely invited the ladies down to the cabin. Madame Caraman was startled at her appearance, but Clary was rather amused. When Minnie threw open the door of the cabin the two ladies uttered a cry of surprise. Who would have expected to see on the Crocodile a boudoir hung with silk, colors harmoniously selected, furniture of bamboo and an arsenal of perfumery on the dressing-table, carpets thick as velvet, and delicate porcelain?

"The ladies will excuse Minnie," said the savage, "but the time was so short she could do no better."

"Do you mean that you have done all this during the night?"

"The captain did not come back until midnight, and then I had a great deal of trouble to find what I wanted in Marseilles."

We all remember those fairy tales where palaces were built in a night. Clary thought of these as she looked around.

Wharton had returned to the Crocodile, desirous to do honor to the fair young English girl who had ridden into a ball-room on horseback, and paid an enormous sum for a vessel to start in four hours for Africa. He, with his eight sailors, scoured the streets of Marseilles waking the shopkeepers, and compelling them to rise and sell him the articles he wanted.

Skilful as women, and assisted by Minnie, these

toilers of the sea cut, sewed, and nailed until all was complete.

The little room next Clary, intended for her governess, was also a model of prettiness and convenience. And on the table was a bottle of brandy and a sugar basin. How did the Captain divine that it was a habit of the dear lady's to take a dainty glass each night before retiring? When Madame saw all these arrangements she was so carried away, that she extended her hand to Minnie, and said cordially:

"Upon my word, you are a wonderful woman!"

Minnie colored deeply.

"There was a knock at the door. It was Wharton.

"Shall we start, my lady?"

"Where is the Alcyon?"

"Just gone."

"And you are sure of passing her?"

"Most assuredly."

"Then keep back a little, and be careful when we start, that we do not seem to be following her."

"All right, my lady. And now, what do you say to having something to eat?"

"I am quite ready," answered Clary.

"And I am starving," added the governess.

Wharton opened a door, and there was a new surprise for the ladies. A cosy dining-room, as neat as a new pin, and on the snow-white table stood lovely flowers.

"Flowers!" cried Clary. "Flowers at this season of the year!"

"Madame Wharton saw to that!" answered the Captain, proudly. "But pray be seated."

Clary and her governess exchanged a look. They understood each other.

"It is all delightful," said the young lady, "but there is one thing wanting."

"Ah! and what is that?" asked the Captain, with a troubled face.

"I desire that you and your wife shall give us the pleasure of breakfasting with us," Clary replied.

There was no possibility of dissuading her, and the Whartons could only obey. The breakfast was excellent, and elicited many compliments from Madame Caraman. Toward the end of the meal Clary said: "And the yacht? We must not lose sight of her."

Madame Wharton begged to be excused, and left the table. It was impossible for her to remain long in one place.

"Excellent creature!" said Wharton, following her with loving eyes.

"You seem to be very much attached to each other."

"Ah! my lady, we have never been separated for a day, and we have, beside, certain memories that render us very near to each other."

"If I recollect," said Clary, with some hesitation, "you said that Madame Wharton was a widow."

"Yes, of a Sioux Indian!"

"And did she herself belong to the same tribe?"

"Yes, but now she is a Christian."

"And her husband? How did he die? I don't think I quite understood—"

"I told you, my lady, that I ate him!"

"Ah!—"

"Yes," said Wharton, sadly, "we ate him, his wife and I, which fact naturally made her a widow!"

Natural as all this seemed to be to the excellent Wharton, Madame Caraman gasped in horrified amazement. As soon as she could get her breath, she asked for an explanation.

Wharton settled himself in his chair and began his story, but Clary said:

"My dear Captain, won't you first look out for the Alcyon?"

"Certainly, if you wish," answered Wharton, obediently rising and going on deck.

"Most extraordinary people," whispered Madame Caraman to Clary. "Cannibals!"

Clary did not know what to reply. She thought to herself that had she known this little incident, she might not have been in such haste to take this vessel.

Wharton was gone some ten minutes. "My lady," he said, as he entered, "I have a thousand apologies to offer; the fireman forgot to put on coal, and—"

"The Alcyon is far ahead?" interrupted Clary.

"Oh! not very far, it will be all right, presently."

"Remember your promise, Captain!"

"I am ready to make a bet, my lady, that before we enter the harbor we shall have long passed that nutshell!"

"And the bet?"

"Oh! what ever you please, Madame. And now shall I go on with the story of my marriage—"

"And your wedding supper!" added Madame, for her curiosity was getting beyond control.

"In the first place, ladies," said the Captain, "I have not always been rich—not that I am very wealthy now, but I have managed to save something—but about twenty-five years ago I had not a dollar in the world. I had tried almost everything. I had lived rather a rough life, and in November, 1825, I was, as I said, absolutely penniless. I had a friend named Dick, and he said to me, one day, 'Tom, you have nothing to lose now, except your skin.' I admitted the truth of this statement, and added that a skin is not good for much if one has nothing to put in it, and I had not had a respectable meal for a week. This good Dick then made a proposal; it was simply that we should go to California. At that time California had never been heard of in Europe. Now, there is not a newspaper that does not tell wonderful stories of the discoveries there. They are all true, I know! I made no objection to the plan, for Dick swore that we could gather up gold like sand. He spoke of the dangers and of the Indians. He said if we were taken prisoners, we were sure to be eaten.

"At any other time, and under any other circumstances, I might have been deterred by these representations, but when the choice lay between dying of hunger and being eaten, I preferred to run the risk of the last. We started in two days. We were armed to the teeth. I won't trouble you with the details of our journey, nor of the hardships we encountered, and will only mention that when we reached San Fran-

cisco we had lost three of our party—one by the bite of a rattlesnake, and the others by a fall down a precipice among the Rocky Mountains. We finally reached the Sacramento. Since that day every square inch of the ground has been worked with machines; we had only our hands, spades and pickaxes. We killed game, and ate it sometimes raw, when we were so hungry that we could not stop to cook it. At the end of a fortnight four of our party were disgusted with our claim, but three of us said that the results of our labors, trifling as they were, showed that the place was good, and that it would be better to stay where we were, than to try a new one. But those who were dissatisfied would not listen to us; we therefore divided our tools and parted.

"Three of us, as I say, remained, and we were, I think, the most energetic of the whole. We were full of confidence. We had built a cabin. It stood under a magnificent tree, and commanded a view of the whole valley and of a path that ran down to a spring of the purest water. All went smoothly, until one day I heard a yell from Dick. I ran to him, and saw with my own eyes a mass of gold worth at least a million of dollars. It is impossible for me to make you understand our sensations at this sight, and at the thought of the possibilities before us. The third man was Osborne, an Englishman. When night came we returned to our hut in the best of spirits and as hungry as tigers, full of kindliness toward each other. We determined to work harder than ever, and agreed that when we had a lot of gold we would divide it

equally. We talked a long time, and finally turned in after drinking altogether too much whiskey. We always slept in our clothes, and had weapons within reach of our hand, for the valley was occasionally invaded by Indians. I was sleeping very heavily, when I was aroused by a strange noise. I started up, and beheld Osborne standing with eyes fixed on a corner of the hut. He evidently saw something I could not see, for this strong man was shaking with nervous fear. 'What is it?' I cried. He did not speak, and I jumped up. Then I saw by the uncertain light of the lamp, something that looked like a branch of a tree, stiff and erect, with a triangular top that moved to and fro. I trembled too, and I wanted to hide, for it was that terrible creature, a rattlesnake. Dick, too was awake by this time, and he was motionless with terror. Suddenly he kicked the door of the hut open—it was within the reach of his foot. Then Osborne, seeing that he could escape in the same way, started. The door was too narrow for them to pass. Dick seized Osborne by the throat, and a most terrible struggle took place, each trying to be the first to leave the hut. Then came a terrible scream. Dick had drawn his cutlass from his breast, and buried it in Osborne's breast. His victory was a short one, for the rattlesnake, attracted by the noise, had flung out his head and struck Dick in the face. Osborne lay dead, and Dick, wrapped in the fold of the deadly serpent, was in convulsions."

Wharton stopped. He was very pale, and wiped his

brow with his handkerchief. Clary hid her face in both her hands, and Madame was fairly overpowered.

The Captain was troubled at the result of his vivid narration.

"I beg your pardon, ladies," he said, after swallowing a glass of rum, "my story is all true. I suppose you think I was a coward not to lift my finger to help my comrades, but I assure you that I never thought of it!"

"Go on, Captain."

"I seemed half dead myself. I watched the rattlesnake, but it did not occur to me to save myself. Finally the creature loosened his hold of my poor Dick, and seemed to be looking about for something else to attack. I saw it coming. I saw its head waving to and fro, as if it were saying: 'Wait a little, my friend, I shall soon have you!' And then that dreadful rattle in its tail was heard.

My gun lay on the ground, and my hand happened to be within an inch of the trigger. I touched it, and the snake received the whole charge in its head. It took me some time to realize that the creature was dead and I alive. I watched it fully ten minutes before I ventured to move. It was the dawn of day that drove away my unreasoning terror and restored me to my senses. I ran to my comrades; they were both dead."

"My dear Captain," said Clary, suddenly, "your narrative is most interesting, but—"

"But what?" asked the American, in evident astonishment.

"I am anxious to know if the Crocodile has

answered your expectations and overtaken the Alcyon."

"Oh! I was not thinking about that, I know the Crocodile so well."

"We will go on deck, if you say so; I need the air.'

"I will continue my story later."

"Yes, I wish to know how Madame Wharton—"

"Became Madame Wharton? Yes, to be sure."

It was with entire confidence in the Crocodile that the captain ascended the stairs. The weather was magnificent, the wind was favorable, and the sails were doing duty as well as the engine.

Clary looked in every direction.

"I see nothing," she said. "Where is the Alcyon?"

With a smile of superiority, the captain answered:

"Far behind us, I presume."

"Would it not be best to ask some one?" said the girl uneasily.

The captain went to the mate, and after a long talk returned with a crestfallen aspect, having been told that the yacht was sailing at the rate of twenty-three knots, while the highest rate of speed achieved by the Crocodile was twelve. His face was so distressed that the heiress, in spite of her annoyance, burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

Captain Wharton was infinitely distressed. He had given his word and had broken it.

"You see, my child," said the governess, "it is useless to try to follow Monte-Cristo. Let us return to

Marseilles, and wait with Mercédès for the news that will not be long in coming."

Clary was now very pale and quiet. Suddenly she looked up.

"Go back!" she said; "no, never! I am weary of the empty life I have been living, and feel already as if I had entered into a new existence. No, I shall go on."

"But Monte-Cristo will be off two hours after he has landed. Do you intend to follow him into the desert, among lions and tigers?"

"Yes, dear friend; that is just what I intend to do."

Madame saw that further remonstrance was useless, and resigned herself to the inevitable.

Captain Wharton now came forward.

"My lady," he said, "I underrated the speed of the yacht, and I have been greatly to blame. I know not what amends I can make, but I promise to serve you faithfully—my ship, my sailors, my wife, and myself."

"But can you rely on them?"

Wharton felt that after his recent failure this doubt was pardonable. He called his wife who, with tears in her eyes, for she felt her husband's mortification very keenly, assured the ladies that she would go wherever her husband wished.

"And now for the sailors," said Wharton, blowing a silver whistle.

The men at once came forward and stood in a row in front of their captain.

"Men of the Crocodile," said Wharton, in stentorian tones, "your captain has enrolled you for an

expedition. Has any one of you any objection to make?"

The sailor who seemed to have been chosen spokesman, came forward a few steps, and twirling his glazed hat in his hand, he said:

"Captain, you can go to the devil if you choose, we are ready to go with you."

And the crew of the Crocodile burst into a wild cheer

This was quite comforting to Wharton, who turned to Clary with an air of triumph.

"Where are we to go?" he asked.

"Into the interior of Africa — to the Desert of Sahara."

"Very good," said Wharton, with an air of indifference.

The scene was a singular one. The blue waters of the Mediterranean; the rough-looking sailors; John's pale, impassible face; Miss Elphys, with her blonde hair; Madame Caraman, who was still a handsome woman, and Minnie, the Sioux, made an extraordinary picture. Miss Elphys waved her hand.

"All of you men," she said, "will receive so much per diem from the hour we land. Mr. Wharton shall himself fix the sum, but you are all to go wherever I go. I am only a woman, but I have great energy, and am not to be deterred by small obstacles."

She was so beautiful that another loud cheer went up from the sailors.

"Rely on us!" they shouted.

"Thanks," said the young girl; "I feel that I can depend on you."

Minnie went up to Miss Elphys.

"You have forgiven my husband, have you not?" she asked.

"Entirely," answered the blonde beauty.

Captain Wharton expressed his gratitude by snatching his wig from his head and throwing it into the sea. His head was as smooth as a billiard ball and perfectly white. Madame Wharton said to the ladies:

"He has not told you, I suppose, that he has been scalped."

The good soul said this as if to be scalped was the simplest thing in the world.

"Excuse me, my lady," muttered Wharton, "but I really did not know what I was doing!"

"I excuse you, sir, and now I will go to my cabin. You will do the best you can."

Miss Elphys and Madame had a long talk together.

"Do you not feel any fear with such strange companions?" asked the governess. "I was afraid that you would lose your temper, when you found that the Alcyon had passed us."

Clary colored.

"The truth is, dear friend, I was very glad; for," she whispered, "I did not want Monte-Cristo to be beaten!"

Madame raised her eyes to Heaven.

"My child! Take care!" she said, half sadly.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ROASTED! SCALPED! EATEN!

THE Crocodile did nobly that day. Clary, quite worn out by her sleepless night, threw herself on her bed and slept soundly, while Madame sat at her side and thought of camels and the gallant Coucou, and then studied the map of Algeria and discovered that it would be impossible to reach it as soon as Wharton had said, and determined to punish him for his deception by remaining in their cabins that night. When, therefore, Madame Wharton knocked to say that the late dinner was served, the ladies replied that they were not well and preferred to have something sent in to them there. The night passed, and it was not until the next evening at five o'clock that John came to say that land was in sight. Miss Clary, followed by her faithful friend, hastily went on deck. It was Algeria that they were approaching, but where was the Alcyon?

"We shall not enter the harbor, I see plainly, for several hours," said the young girl; "but as it cannot be helped, I rely on you, Captain, to make those hours pass as rapidly as possible. And as I foresee that there will be little time to talk when we are on shore, I wish you to tell me the rest of your adventures."

A half hour later, seated at the dinner-table, Captain Wharton resumed his narration.

"I was about to leave the cabin where my two dead friends lay, when suddenly an arrow whistled through the air and lodged in the frame of the door. It was plain to me that my position was critical; experience, moreover, had taught me from the color of the arrow, that it was poisoned. What to do I knew not. At last an inspiration came to me. The hut was quite solidly built, with a double roof to protect it from the rain. Between these roofs was a space in which I decided to hide, and felt sure that these Indians—for such they were, I felt certain—would not find me. I almost regretted the death of the rattlesnake, for had the Indians found the creature there they would not have lingered long. I clambered into the roof with my carabine, powder and shot, a knife and a hatchet. Lying there flat on my stomach I managed to find an aperture through which I could survey my foes. I was aghast when I saw their number and the tribe to which they belonged. We had kept up a friendly intercourse with the Sioux and several other tribes, but these were Arikaras, our bitterest foes. They hated the whites, and the scalps hanging at their belts showed that they had been on the war-path. There were about fifty warriors and in the rear were two persons; one was Ton-Sam-Ba, the other was his wife, the Flower of the Prairie. I saw that I could not help the poor creatures, and yet I knew well that they would be tortured, burned at the stake and eaten. I determined that I would make an effort to rescue them.

I admired the noble bearing of the squaw, though I little supposed that in her I beheld the future companion of my life!"

Flower of the Prairie, now Minnie Wharton, endeavored to calm the excitement of her husband. Madame Caraman enjoyed the scene immensely and laughed in her sleeve, while the heiress preserved her gravity as best she could.

"Go on, Captain," she said at last.

Wharton continued:

"The Arikaras surrounded the hut, while I kept quiet. I determined to sell my life as dearly as possible. The savages were a little afraid to enter the hut. Some of them looked up at the roof and said a few words, but as I knew nothing of their language, I did not know what to expect. Suddenly I heard the most terrible uproar. They had entered the hut and found the two dead bodies and the rattlesnake. These creatures are regarded by the Indians with superstitious awe, and the sorcerers use their rattles in their charms. The two whites had killed the rattlesnake, and the great Manitou had struck them dead. The place was accursed, since it had been visited by the anger of the Most High. For a few moments I flattered myself that they would depart, but they lingered and seemed to be consulting each other. Flower of the Prairie stood a little apart; she was very beautiful then; this was a good many years ago, you understand. I would have given my lump of gold to know what these imps of Satan were saying. I forgot to tell you, by the way, that I had saved the gold. The Indians moved about

rapidly and seemed to be gathering up brushwood, which they carried into the hut. Do you know the infernal idea they had taken into their heads? They had heard that fire purifies everything, and they meant to burn down the hut. Oddly enough, I did not comprehend this for some time. I divined all sorts of things except the truth. Presently I perceived a peculiar odor, and realized that the hut was on fire. I started up, thinking only of escape, and forgetting the savages. Just then my gun, heated by the flames, went off. I felt a sharp pain in my foot and fell into the very centre of the group below. The Arikaras were frightened out of their wits, thinking that it was the devil himself, but presently realized that I was white. They snatched me up and carried me away."

"Excuse me," said Clary, "but how soon do you think we shall make the harbor?"

"Not for a good two hours," answered Wharton.

Clary smiled at this frank confession.

"I fainted," continued the Captain, "and when I came to my senses I found myself lying on the ground securely bound, and saw, by the light of torches, the Arikaras sitting round their council and smoking steadily. Ton-Sam-Ba was tied to a stake at some little distance. Flower of the Prairie, unbound, lay on the ground near him. My first sensation was intense hunger. I had not the smallest idea of how long a time had elapsed since my fall. I watched the Indians for some time, and then unable to bear it any longer, I called to them:

"'Hallo! comrades,' I said. 'Are you going to let

me die of hunger? Can't you give me a mouthful or two?' The Indians rose and came to me.

"'You killed the sacred serpent, Pale Face," said one.

"'Yes, or he would have killed me!' I resolved to show no fear of these savages who were flourishing their tomahawks in their hands. They seemed to be disputing among themselves. I afterwards discovered that this dispute was about my scalp, which was at last awarded to the chief. They then continued their smoking. All at once I felt something at my side. Of course I thought it was another rattlesnake. I turned my head as far as my bonds would allow and beheld no venomous serpent, but the Flower of the Prairie. How she had continued to approach me without attracting the attention of the cannibals, I do not yet know. She looked at me with a sweet smile, and then her hand touched me. She showed me a red fruit like a plum; this she placed in my mouth. In five minutes I was sound asleep. When I woke, friends, I had been scalped! My head felt strangely, and when I put my hand upon it I found that it had been bandaged with wet mosses and leaves. My body was burning with fever, but my head was strangely cold. My bonds had been untied, and I was inside a hut. I stretched out my limbs, and I heard a whisper; it was English, mere disconnected words which signified: 'You are sick, lie still!' I instantly divined that this was the voice of my guardian angel. I have since learned that this wonderful woman can see in the dark like a cat, so that she perceived the varying expressions on my face.

"'Ton-Sam-Ba dead,' she said; 'roasted alive, not eaten yet. Arikaras frightened, run away.'

"After a few minutes, I saw a light which showed me Flower of the Prairie's sweet face. She raised me from the floor, and assisted me into the open air where she made a bed of soft leaves for me. 'I am hungry,' I said. My angel looked disturbed." Here the Captain hesitated, he had reached a difficult part of his narrative. Madame Caraman was immensely amused. Every time that Wharton spoke of his guardian angel, she looked up at the tall bony creature who rejoiced in the name of Flower of the Prairie, but the widow of Ton-Sam-Ba now discreetly withdrew.

Madame felt, therefore, at liberty to ask a question that had long been on her lips.

"Has Madame Wharton changed much since then?" she asked.

"Oh! yes. She has grown much handsomer."

This was too much for Madame; she covered her face with her handkerchief and rushed to her cabin, from behind the closed door of which came gasps and smothered shrieks.

"What is the matter with Madame?" asked Wharton, with much concern.

"Nothing of any consequence," answered the sorely tried Clary. "She often has such attacks."

"I am not sorry," continued Wharton, "to tell you the rest of my story alone. You are the only one who can understand Minnie's greatness and her unselfishness."

"Go on, I beg of you."

"As I was saying, she stood still, evidently in great trouble. Finally, with an air of decision, she ran into the forest, and soon came back with some bits of meat well cooked and quite appetizing. This meat was laid on some vine leaves. She held this improvised dish toward me. I took it with thanks, but as I was about to eat it, I said:

"'You must have some too.'

"'No,' she answered, blushing. 'I don't care for any.'

"'Then I won't eat a mouthful,' I answered, with decision.

"Then she joined me in my repast. When I had finished, I asked her where she had got that steak. She hesitated, and then in a trembling voice, replied:

"'It is Ton-Sam-Ba; all that is left of my husband.'

"And I had eaten her husband! He had been roasted alive by the Arikaras, who in the midst of their repast had been attacked by the Sioux. His wife escaped in the confusion, and carrying me away on her shoulders, had concealed me and herself in a hole in the rocks until the Arikaras had gone away. Thanks to the narcotic she had given me, I slept through the agony of being scalped. She wrapped my head in herbs, the salutary virtues of which she had learned by experience, and finally, as her last sacrifice, had brought me part of Ton-Sam-Ba to preserve my life."

"Captain," said the mate, opening the door of the cabin, "we are entering the harbor."

Clary rose hastily. In fact she was uncomfortable alone with this eccentric Wharton.

The Captain stopped her.

"Tell me," he said, "before you go, don't you think it was my duty to marry Flower of the Prairie?"

"Certainly, most certainly."

"She became a Christian and received her name of Minnie in baptism, you understand?"

Clary escaped, anxious to breathe the fresh air, and questioned herself if it was not a little hazardous to venture into the desert with these cannibals.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MALDAR'S FAREWELL.

THE Alcyon flew over the sea, and when land was signaled, Monte-Cristo went on deck with his son. Esperance was delighted with his new life. His eyes had never been so bright or his color so radiant, and when he saw Algeria, he exclaimed with admiration.

"We shall land there, my son," said Monte-Cristo, and then our perils begin. Your courage will not fail you, I am sure."

"Not while you are with me."

"But we must be prepared for everything. Suppose that by some unforeseen accident we should be separated. I am strong, but Fate is stronger. Do not deceive yourself, my boy. I am but a grain of sand in this immensity. I may be ground to dust, I may disappear. Then, my son, you must be ready to take my place. Swear to me, Esperance, that come what will you will not despair, but will struggle on for your mother's sake. You must love her, boy, more than ever. She is one of those gentle, holy creatures who think only of duty and sacrifices. I regard her as a sacred trust. If I fall, she is in your charge; but no temerity, Esperance, remember that. Your life is not yours to lose. You belong to your mother!"

"But what do you fear, father? Your words sadden me."

"I fear nothing, my son. I merely wished to prepare you for the worst."

And Monte-Cristo, with his face as calm as usual, turned away to give some orders to the sailors.

The Count was not a man to yield to presentiments, and yet a heavy load now lay on his heart. It seemed to him that there were vague menaces in the very air that he breathed. It was long since Monte-Cristo had had this feeling, or that the beating of his heart had been thus accelerated.

Around him were his devoted servants, Bertuccio, Jacopo and Coucon, who showed the most intense affection for him. They were all ready to obey the slightest signal from their chief, and would have been killed themselves ere an enemy could reach their master.

The town gleamed white against the blue sky. How many memories did it awaken in the soul of Monte-Cristo as, standing in the prow, he looked toward the rocky coast where Carthagenian ships had landed Hannibal's booty.

Suddenly he started, for Jacopo touched his arm.

"Come quick, master, the door of your cabin is open."

"What of that?"

"That is not all, sir; the big safe in your cabin is open also."

"Impossible!"

"It is so, master, and I saw piles of precious stones and gold lying on the carpet."

Monte-Cristo frowned. Could it be that among these men, whom he so trusted, there was one who was a thief?

"Come with me," he said to Esperance, and sadly went below.

The door of his cabin was indeed wide open, and jewels lay sparkling in the sunshine. The Count went at once to the safe. It was made in the form of a trunk, and covered with thick leather; the lock opened with a spring, of which Monte-Cristo alone knew the secret, and yet what Jacopo had said was true. It looked as if the thief had thrown out the jewels and the gold in a rage at not finding what he sought.

"You see, master. We must have the robber!"

"And who says a robber has been here?" Monte-Cristo was very pale. "Would a robber have left these diamonds? Tell me, my friend, who knows of this? Who has seen this disorder?"

"No one, master. I came directly to you."

"That was wise. Now hear me, Jacopo, not a word of this to any one."

"But, master, there is a thief on board."

Monte-Cristo frowned; he did not like his orders disputed.

"Go, and not a word to any one!"

When the Count was alone with Esperance, the boy said:

"But father, there is certainly a dishonest man on board this yacht."

The Count took his boy's hand, and leading him to the door bade him examine the locks and tell him what he saw.

"I see nothing," answered Esperance, after a long silence, "unless it be a little cut near the key-hole but that is nothing."

"Ah! my son, these nothings are the things in this world which we must study. That cut or scratch was made by a dagger, Esperance."

"Oh! father!"

"A man—I will tell you his name presently—endowed with marvellous skill, opened this door with his dagger—picked the lock which has defied clever locksmiths."

As he spoke, Monte-Cristo closed the door, and then taking a dagger, whose blade was no thicker than paper, moved the spring with it.

"You see, my son," he said.

"Yes, but the safe?"

"Was opened in the same way, I presume. Look carefully. What do you see?"

Monte-Cristo watched his son; he saw that his lesson had borne fruit.

Suddenly the lad uttered an exclamation.

"I know, father; I know!"

"Do not be in a hurry. To believe too quickly is a grave error."

"It was not with a dagger that the thief opened the safe."

"Why do you call him a thief? Is there any proof that he has taken anything?"

"I can tell you, father," said Esperance, "how this safe was opened."

"Go on, my boy, I am ready to praise you if you are right."

"The instrument used here was not a dagger—it was a bit of steel, such as is in watches."

"You are right."

"With that steel he managed to move the springs, and when he took it out he did it so carelessly that he left a small bit in the lock."

Monte-Cristo was delighted with the lad's sagacity; he was a worthy descendant of the prisoner who, in fourteen years of agony, had learned to analyze and weigh every trifle.

"Am I right, father?" asked Esperance, uneasy at Monte-Cristo's silence.

"Yes, my son, yes; you have fairly won the right to know my secret. I have already said that the man who came here was no thief. Now move those diamonds, what do you see?"

"The dagger, father; the dagger."

"And this dagger is passed through a parchment. Those characters, Esperance, are written in blood, and I will tell you what they mean."

"MALDAR TO MONTE-CRISTO:—The poor man, who is with Allah, is stronger than the rich man, who is against him! Beware of the Khouans!"

"What are the Khouans, father?"

"I will tell you, but not now; there is no time to lose, I understand. Come!"

They went on deck.

"Jacopo," said Monte-Cristo, "when did the Arab jump overboard?"

"Oh! master, he is here, under the care of Coucon."

"You are sure? Then, Jacopo, bid him come to me."

Jacopo returned alone.

"Master," he said, "the Zouave is sound asleep."

"And the Arab?" asked the Count.

"He is not there, but we will find him. Come, comrades, we must look in every corner for the Arab."

The Count stopped them.

"Look!" he said, "there he is!" and he pointed to a black spot on the shore.

He lifted the glass he wore at his side. Yes, it was Maldar, who, with clenched hands, threatened the yacht.

"Friends!" said Monte-Cristo, "this man is the enemy. Remember that we are about to land on soil where every bush conceals another like him—an adversary and an assassin. Soldiers of the good cause, let each man among you be ready to do his duty!"

An enthusiastic shout was the reply of his men.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

DESERT LIFE.

AN enormous gorge, looking as if cut by the axe of a giant, is the entrance to the Great Sahara, on the south from the Province of Oran. Through this gorge a man was slowly riding, his face half-concealed by his white hood. His horse—a magnificent animal, marked on the flank with a star of six points—set his feet down firmly on the rough road.

Suddenly the man halted. On the left rose that strange granite pile, known as the Rock of Blood. Many a murder had been committed there; many a long-existing hatred had been there assuaged.

When the winds of the desert howled through this gorge, it was as if the spirits of evil were let loose to shriek out their horrible laughter and their cries of rage, while the tamarinds tossed their green branches.

The man threw back his white hood with long, lean arms; his thin face, with black pointed beard, was lifted to the sky, and his pale lips murmured agitated words. He leaped from his horse, and going to the Rock of Blood examined it with great care. On the stone near the ground was a star precisely like that on his horse.

He prostrated himself, and then sprang again into his saddle. The animal felt the pressure of his knees

and was off like the wind. Presently the horse and his rider were in a blaze of light; they had entered the Great Sahara.

Those who have not seen that place, have seen nothing. It seems to be the realization of annihilation. Not a sound, not an echo, not a movement; and over all this, intense light. The sun, now low in the horizon, looked like the mouth of a great oven, blazing and red.

The man rode on, with his eyes fixed on the disc. How could his eyes bear such light? This man's face was scarred all over. Amid the folds of his bournous the handle of a yataghan could be seen. It was held there by the flesh itself, for this man was one of those fanatics who tortured themselves. Occasionally he placed his hand on the yataghan and turned it in the throbbing flesh. He had been torn with hot irons, the sharp thorns of the cactus had pierced his tongue; he had undergone all sorts of tortures. His brothers called him "the Saint." He spoke to God, and God heard him. The desert was his kingdom. A smile came to his lips as his horse's feet touched the hot sand, and a flash of joy irradiated his blood-shot eyes.

He went on and on, without a path to guide him. The sun was down, and the luminous night, starry and beautiful, was all about him. Suddenly he raised himself in his stirrups, and caught the gun that hung at his back. He seemed to wait. Was it an enemy or a wild beast? But his gun was aimed skyward. What enemy could the Saint expect from that direction? The moon rose pale and saintly. A report was heard.

The Saint saluted the moon, and recited in a low voice these words from the Koran:

"The hour is fixed for those who are to appear before God."

"That hour has come," said a voice, out of the darkness.

The Saint replied, still quoting from the Koran:

"Swear that you are sent to show the narrow road."

"I swear by the Koran," answered the voice.

Then the Saint, turning to the east, uttered three times an appeal for aid and guidance. And when he again looked around, a man stood at his side. This man was tall and vigorous, and wrapped from head to foot in a brown bournous. The night had become darker.

"Are you he for whom I wait?" asked the Saint.

"I am sent by God."

"Have you the sign?"

"Look!" answered the new comer, throwing his bournous aside and showing his emaciated breast.

And on this breast appeared, as by some magic art, the star with its six points. The Saint fell at his feet and kissed them.

"Rise, man. The true believer kneels only to Allah."

"And are you not sent by Allah? Have you not come to chastise the insolent oppressors of the race of Islam?"

"I am he. Rise. I said to the United Brothers that I would be here in the middle of the desert. I told them the day and the hour, in the fourth month of the year, when the moon came up before the sunset glow

had died from out the sky. The Brothers have sent you, then, to meet me?"

"They bade me come."

"Are they ready to obey the will of Allah? Are they ready to sacrifice their women and their children, their flocks and their herds? Are they ready to bear everything—tortures and privations—to re-conquer the Kingdom of Allah?"

"Look at me! I have inflicted torture on myself—my breast bones—with a wound that will never be healed. The Brothers, like myself, submit to the eternal word of God."

"Then I say unto you, Maldar Mohammed Ben Abdallah, I say unto you, that the hour has come. War and death unto the Christians! Blood shall run like water, and in this blood shall our enemies be drowned!"

He was silent for a moment, and then he continued:

"Where are the Khouans?"

"At Ouargla—ready for you."

"And have they the Christian prisoners?"

"Yes, master, there are fifty of them."

"But they are unharmed?"

"Not a hair on their heads has been touched, because you bade us spare them; but the true believers murmur, and demand their death—the death of one in especial—a French Captain."

"What is it to kill a man? A few drops of blood are shed, which are quickly dried by the sand. Go you to the Brothers, say to them that before the moon has accomplished the twentieth part of her monthly

course I shall be there among them, and then blood shall run in streams. Go!"

And Maldar pointed with an imperious gesture toward the horizon. And the Saint, after another prostration, again mounted his horse and was lost to view.

"Yes," murmured Maldar, "and the river of blood will be the spring at which the servants of God will drink."

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE FORTRESS.

UP to 1862, when one of the brave officers, Commandant Colonelin, succeeded in penetrating those regions, Ouargla was looked upon by Europeans as a mysterious spot—an Islam fortress, defended against the profane by the simoon and the sands of the desert. Surrounded by high walls, an oasis in the desert, she profited by her isolation to play at royalty. King after king succeeded to the throne, played their ephemeral part, and passed away.

On that day when Maldar and the Saint talked together in the wilderness, one of the gates of Ouargla, sheltered by tall, feathering palms, stood wide open and was crowded by soldiers and the people, all shouting together. A hideous creature, draped in a ragged bournous, had climbed on the wall, and with wild gestures was exhorting the crowd.

"You call yourselves wise," he shouted. "And you are foolish ——, why do you cumber your dungeons with these prisoners, spared by your obstinate clemency? They lie in their dungeons dreaming of the hour when they will lead your children into slavery, and uncover the faces of your wives! Arise, children of Islam! Vengeance and death to the enemy!"

And as he ceased, to take breath, the crowd pointed to the wounds on his body, and replied with frantic yells that sounded like those of wild animals.

For six months prisoners had been kept in the fortress—not as hostages, for the people of Ouargla entered into no compacts with the infidels. Why were their heads not whitening in the sun above the great gates of the city? Why were the vultures deprived of their prey?

The Marabout was right, and the crowd yelled that the infidels should be given to them.

Then the Marabout, feeling that his mission was accomplished, and that the people were now awake, sprang from the wall into the crowd, who knelt before him to kiss his garments, for he was a Saint who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and was entitled to wear the green turban, had not his humility forbidden. A terrible excitement thrilled the crowd. Women fell in convulsions, uttering frightful screams; others trampled on their bodies, because Allah smiles on all who suffer and have undergone torture.

Drawing after him this shrieking crowd, the Marabout went toward the fortress. Under the red light of the evening sky this crowd looked as if they had come from the infernal regions. Some of these carried knives, others guns, more sticks, the sharp points of which had been hardened in the fire; others, again, had the native weapons, branches of thorny cactii.

Who were the threatened victims? W will precede the crowd to the prison and discover.

CHAPTER L.

PRISONERS.

TWENTY feet under ground were the dungeons of the Citadel, dark and damp, hewn out of a solid rock. To reach them, labyrinthine passages were to be trodden. Lying on the ground in one of these terrible places, was a young man, around his ankle was a chain riveted to the wall.

A window, opening on an abandoned well, supplied his fainting lungs with unhealthy air. This man was in rags, which showed here and there signs of the French uniform; a ragged epaulette was on his shoulder, and a leather belt around his waist was intended to hold a sword. The door opened, a dark form appeared and placed a dish of food on the floor. Another twenty-four hours of unbroken solitude! Ten years before, this young man had been proud of his name, he loved his father, adored his mother, and was gay and happy. Then a heavy cloud arose: his father, an officer, was stigmatized as a traitor and a murderer. The fortune enjoyed by his wife and son was proved to have been stolen at the price of infamous crimes. He called himself Count Morcerf, and this title became a burning disgrace. His millions were stained with blood, the blood of his benefactor

This man, who lay in the prisons of Ouargla, was Albert de Morcerf, son of a peer of France, who had committed suicide; he was also the son of Mercédès; and was known as Captain Joliette, one of the heroes of Africa. He longed for death, and repined that it was not quicker in coming.

Albert lived over the past. He remembered the tempest of rage and sorrow in which he had challenged Monte-Cristo in order to wash out the insult offered to his beloved father. Between the provocation and the meeting, Albert had learned that the accusation was just, and had gone to the ground there to brave the contempt of all Paris by apologizing to Monte-Cristo. Returning to the Hôtel, he heard the report of a pistol. His father had killed himself.

The young man adored his mother, and he said to her: "We have no home, no shelter; there is only dishonor for you and for me. And yet swear that you will live! I shall go to Algeria; within six months I shall be an officer or dead. Your future is assured if I become an officer. I shall bear a new name, and we two will be proud of it. If I am killed, alas! you too will die, dear mother, and our troubles will be at an end!"

And the poor woman consented to this separation. She became Mercédès again, and buried herself in Marseilles.

The soldier, Joliette, began his glorious campaign, and it seemed as if the anger of the Most High was assuaged, and that the sins of the father were not to be visited in this instance on the child.

He was admired and loved. In three years he was able to write to his mother, "Albert de Morcerf is forgotten. Captain Joliette alone exists." And with this letter Albert sent the cross that the Governor of Algeria had himself placed on his breast.

The mother wept with joy, feeling that this cross wiped away the stain from that tomb where lay dishonor. Now again could Albert hold his head high in that society which is so insolent to the weak, so craven to the strong; he would return ere long, and they would resume that life which had been so suddenly broken up.

Alas! once again these bright hopes were scattered, and Mercédès, in her despair, wrote the note to Monte-Cristo which brought him in such haste to Marseilles.

And now we see Captain Joliette fastened to a heavy chain and longing for death. It was over three months since he had been captured and carried across the Desert. He had been all this time in momentary expectation of death. He knew that these Arabs did not care to burden themselves with prisoners, and he cherished no illusion in respect to his own fate.

It seemed to him when tied to the back of one of those blooded horses, that brave the heat of the desert with impunity, and was carried on and on, that he was an actor in some infernal drama. Finally he became unconscious, and when he was himself again he was in this dungeon, and the chains riveted to his feet. Imagine the torture, to a man of action, in this silence and enforced tranquillity. The black slave appeared every morning. In vain did Albert

address him in the Arab tongue, the man did not seem to understand him. Was it not terrible not to know where he was, who were his captors, or the probable duration of his captivity? His only distraction was in watching the changes in a streak of light which came through the opening in the cell.

For a long time Albert did not abandon hope. He knew that his mother would move heaven and earth in his behalf, and he had heard her say that she knew one person who had been in the Château d'If for fourteen years, and who had finally made his escape.

"Why can I not do the same?" said Joliette, and with the thought the dungeon became as if illuminated, but he soon discovered that the granite was so hard that no tool could scratch it, that the chain was so forged that no human power could break it; and realized that the only opening was so high that ten men standing one upon the shoulders of the other could not reach it, and that the jailer could not be moved by entreaties nor bribes. When he fully realized his utter powerlessness, then Albert fell into a fever that wore him to a shadow. After three months of restless endeavor, Albert had become, a week before our readers see him in this dungeon, convinced of the uselessness of further effort, and determined to starve himself. It was a slow method of committing suicide, but he had the satisfaction of knowing that his enemies were aware that he was braving them, for his food was each day taken away untouched. His dizzy brain was crazed with visions. He saw his mother, and heard

her tender voice. He raised himself on one knee and extended his arms.

At this moment the assassins, led by the Marabout, entered the passage that led to Joliette's dungeon. He heard them, and struggled to his feet; it should not be said that a Captain in the French army lay prone on the ground like a child at play. Battering rams were brought to bear on the door, and in the midst of this tumult Joliette heard an unusual sound above his head—the streak of light was obscured by a human face, and a voice called to him:

"Captain! Captain! You must not die!"

The door yielded to the assailants, and they rushed into the cell.

CHAPTER LI.

"GREEK MEETS GREEK!"

WE must retrace our steps four days. Sixty leagues from Ouargla an immense caravan was encamped. It was a most dreary spot—not a green thing, not a blade of grass; nevertheless, it was here that Monte-Cristo had taken up his temporary quarters. Not two hours after his landing he started forth again. He felt that there was no time to lose, and with his energy and his gold Monte-Cristo removed all obstacles and his caravan was organized. He had added to the men he brought with him a hundred determined fellows, and all mounted. He had eight hundred camels to carry provisions and water. He had attended to all the details of these preparations himself, being perfectly calm and undisturbed. He stimulated the indolence of some, satisfied the cupidity of others, and exacted from all an oath of obedience. He and Esperance kept a little in advance of the rest of the party. Bertuccio, Coucon and Jacopo followed, all wondering at the perfect *sang-froid* of their master. Where were they going? No one but Monte-Cristo knew. He had only said: "To the South!" But when alone with his son he had shown him Ouargla on the map and had said: "Look—that is our point!"

Monte-Cristo had been long aware that the downfall of Abd-el-Kader was but a step on the bloody path that France was to tread ere she could gain ascendency over Algeria. He knew, too, that Ouargla was the refuge of these assassins and the place where all their plots were hatched; and had he doubted, the name pronounced by Coucon — of Mohammed-Ben-Abdallah — gave him certainty. This was the man who had once already feigned submission to the French and had disappeared, nominally to join the pilgrimage to Mecca. How was it that he had not recognized this man in him who had given himself the name of Maldar? Generous and hospitable, he accepted the Arab as a guest, and for this hospitality he had been rewarded by an insult—almost a threat. Maldar had opened his safe merely to show that he could do so, and left his farewell for Monte-Cristo in these words:

"Beware of the Khouans!"

The Indians have their Thugs, the Irish have their Fenians, the Arabs have their Khouans; that is to say, a mysterious brotherhood which has but one aim—the murder and expulsion of foreigners. They think nothing of their lives, but in battle occupy the most perilous positions, seeing only the Paradise of Mahomet open before them. Monte-Cristo knew all about these people, and these were the enemies he was to encounter in the desert. When we find him four days' march from Ouargla, he had begun to indulge in a faint hope.

It was night, and Monte-Cristo, with his son, was in his tent. The Count was writing to Haydée, for each night he dispatched a courier to Europe. The child,

being weary with the heat and fatigue of the day, had fallen asleep, and the Count often turned with uplifted pen to look at him. Ah! how many dreams and hopes rested on that dear, curly head! Monte-Cristo asked himself if he could have punished Morcerf as he had done, if he himself had at that time been a father. He understood now all the tortures he had inflicted on Mercédès and on Morcerf. Would not these chastisements fall some day on the head of Esperance? Suddenly the boy uttered a cry and began to struggle.

"Father! Help! They are dragging me away!"

Monte-Cristo sprang to the boy's side, pale and really frightened. The dream—for of course it was a dream—was so vivid that the boy clutched his father, and even when aroused, trembled violently.

"What is it, my child?" asked Monte-Cristo, his voice trembling in spite of himself; "a bad dream?"

"Was it a dream, father? It seemed very real to me. I will tell you about it."

"And do not forget, my son, that dreams are lies!"

"Yes, I know that, and yet—"

The child stopped—his eyes were fixed on one corner of the tent.

"Why do you look over there so fixedly?" asked Monte-Cristo, uneasily.

"Because—it is very strange. Was I asleep, father? A moment ago I saw the side of the tent part, and a dark figure stood there."

"And when was this?"

"Just when you left the table to come to me."

"You saw me come toward you, then?"

And Monte-Cristo in his turn, looked toward the corner of the tent.

"I think I was then half awake, father, but I had been dreaming that the tent opened and two men, two frightful creatures, with faces like skeletons, were crawling toward me. I felt like the birds we read of who are charmed by serpents. I could not move, and the two men came nearer and nearer. Then I felt their cold hands touch me, and they began to drag me away; it was then that I screamed. Father," continued the boy, "I am not afraid to die, but I cannot be separated from you!"

Monte-Cristo caressed his son. A strange feeling chilled him, was it fear? His son separated from him! What folly! And yet his eyes never moved from the corner of the tent.

"Child," he said, "I will watch over you. Be calm and try to sleep, it is the heat of the day. Think of your mother and sweet slumber will come!"

Esperance smiled, the color returned to his cheeks. He closed his eyes; his fresh lips murmured "Mother," and he began to breathe calmly and regularly.

Then a frown gathered on the brow of Monte-Cristo. He gently withdrew his arm on which the boy's head rested, and rising he moved softly toward that part of the tent at which the child had pointed. It was made of the thickest material like those used by English soldiers in India. Monte-Cristo touched the long fold and started. Esperance had not been dreaming. The stuff was cut from the top to the bottom with a clean cut, as if made by a razor.

Who had done this? Who but the implacable, ever present enemy, who had sworn hatred to the French, hatred above all to those who were crossing the Desert to snatch their prey away. And with what intention had they done this? Not to assassinate himself, but to take Esperance away. The Count turned deadly pale, and beads of sweat pearled his brow.

But the dream? Are there not among other physiological mysteries, presentiments of danger which take the form of dreams?

Monte-Cristo went to the door of the tent, and looked out.

Before him were only the black rocks irradiated by the moonlight. Monte-Cristo looked down on the ground; the shifting sand retained no footprints, and yet men had come to his tent and his well-trained ear had heard no sound. For the first time in his life, Monte-Cristo doubted himself. How could he fight such foes as these? He turned toward Esperance, trying to persuade himself that it was a dream. But there was one material fact—the canvas had been cut with a dagger.

Monte-Cristo laced the canvas together with a fine steel wire, feeling as he did so that all precautions were in vain, that his vigilance must never falter; he must know no rest. He had sworn to take the boy back in safety to his mother.

Suddenly he heard an appalling noise without, and above the clamor came a roar—the roar of a lion.

With one bound the Count sprang to the side of his son. He caught him in his arms; he knew that he must

go to the protection of those without and he could not leave Esperance alone. Carrying the child on one arm, his gun on the other, Monte-Cristo went out. The Arabs were flying in all directions. Again was the roar heard, and this time it was nearer.

"Let no one move!" shouted Monte-Cristo.

"It is a lion, master," answered Coucon, coming to the Count's side.

"Tell me what to do," said Jacopo. "I am ready, master."

"Let no one fire until I do," replied the Count. "If I miss my aim," and he smiled slightly, "then it will be your turn."

Another roar, and a report.

"Who can that be!" cried the Count, rushing in the direction whence the two sounds had come.

The night was perfectly clear, and Monte-Cristo beheld the lion, crouching on a block of granite; his mane was erect, and he was uttering low growls. Under the animal's enormous paw lay a dark object; one arm fell over the rock, and the hand still grasped the gun that had been discharged. This man was Bertuccio, the foster father of Benedetto, the faithful servant. Was he dead? The Count pushed back those who crowded upon him. They understood that he was not to be interfered with.

For a moment Monte-Cristo was undecided; if he fired he must hit the lion full in the forehead, and this point was concealed by Bertuccio. He moved toward a pinnacle of black granite some four yards from the lion; but he never moved his eyes from those of the

beast, whose growls became more and more subdued. With some difficulty he climbed the granite rock and stood erect. The lion stirred, arose and was ready to spring. As he did so Monte-Cristo fired, and the animal fell to the ground in the struggles of death.

Monte-Cristo lifted the head of the injured man upon his knee. The two were alone. On Bertuccio's lips was a bloody foam. With the point of his dagger the Count opened the man's teeth, and then gave him a few drops of a brilliant red liquid—that which had come to him from the Abbé Faria. Bertuccio shivered from head to foot. The marvellous liquid had brightened the last sparks of life, and Bertuccio opened his eyes. He fixed them on the face of Monte-Cristo.

"Ah! master," he sighed.

The strong man, who had seen many die, was profoundly moved. Bertuccio moaned:

"The lion's claws have torn my breast like sharp daggers. You have come, thank you."

"I came too late, alas! Have you anything to say, Bertuccio? Any last request to make?"

"I must speak to you," panted the dying man.

Monte-Cristo administered more of the red elixir.

"Take care!" said Bertuccio, "enemies are near. I saw and pursued them, and suddenly found myself face to face with the lion."

"Enemies! Who are they? How many?"

"Two."

Monte-Cristo remembered what Esperance had said.

"I saw them wandering about your tent. I wanted

to prove to you that I was always watching over you and the boy."

"Good friend!" and the Count carried the cold hand to his lips. "But did you know the men?"

"They were Arabs. Look out for Esperance!"

"Yes—but tell me if I can do anything for you. You have been with me twenty years, and have served me nobly. I swear that whatever you now command I will obey."

"It is about that bad man."

"You mean Benedetto?"

"Yes, master, and I am sorry that you held back my hand when I was about to crush him like any other venomous monster. And yet I love him still."

Monte-Cristo raised his eyes to heaven in wonder at the generosity of the man.

"I understand, Bertuccio. And now, what do you want me to do?"

"I do not wish you to kill him if he crosses your path. Have mercy on him!"

"I swear to you, my faithful friend, that even if Benedetto threatens my life, I will not kill him."

Bertuccio's eyes closed.

"Thanks, master," he murmured, and died.

Monte-Cristo, kneeling at his side, prayed for the soul of him who died in the defense of his son. Then rising slowly, he descended from the rock and went to look at the lion. At the side of the animal he saw a slender, white form, and a sweet voice in the dialect of one of the tribes of the desert:

"I have sought thee, I have found thee."

CHAPTER LII.

MEDJI.

SHE who uttered these strange words was wrapped in a white bournous, her face hidden by a thick vail. Monte-Cristo stood transfixed with surprise.

"Who art thou?" he asked.

"I have no family; they have tortured me. I have no friend, because my friend is in the power of the enemy."

The Count had an inspiration.

"Medji! Your name is Medji!"

She answered "yes" with an air of pride, as she threw back her long vail. The Count was almost startled at the beauty of this child of the desert. Her form was perfect and her features regularly beautiful, and her eyes were infinitely tender. The men, who had crowded around the Count, now exclaimed.

"It is Medji, master. Ask her where the Captain is."

She heard, and her face, of a delicate olive color, became pale as death. She extended her arm toward the south.

"He is there, under the earth, in the dungeon of the Sullava."

"You mean in the dungeon of the mysterious city—Ouargla?"

"Yes," and the girl shivered. "And he will be killed there."

Monte-Cristo dismissed his men with an imperative gesture. The Arabs understood her. Who could say that there was not a traitor among them.

"And why are you here?" he asked, gently.

"I came in search of you."

"Of me?" he repeated.

"I will tell you all," she said, "but take me where I can be with you alone."

Monte-Cristo looked at her intently, and saw a singular thing. On each cheek below her mouth was a tiny six-pointed star, tattooed into the skin.

"Follow me," he said.

As he turned, the Arabs, who could no longer be restrained, uttered wild shouts, for a man who kills a lion is always a hero in their eyes.

"Coucon," said the Count, sadly, "attend to the last duties for poor Bertuccio. We will bury him at sunrise."

"Poor Bertuccio!" sighed the Zouave. "He was a good companion."

"And a devoted friend," answered the Count, through whose heart now shot a sudden pang.

Where was Esperance? He had forgotten him for a few moments. But the lad came running to meet him.

"Why did you not let me go with you, father? If you were not afraid, I should not have been."

Medji smiled on the boy, who asked a question of his father in a low voice.

"It is a friend, dear child; give her your hand."

Esperance offered his hand, which Medji carried to her lips.

"Son of him who slays lions," she said. "May God measure thy years by the kisses you give thy father."

Monte-Cristo laid his hand on his son's shoulder, and accompanied by Medji, was going toward his tent, when an Arab sprang forward and extended both arms.

"Stop, master," he cried, "do not receive this woman in this camp."

"And why not?"

"Do you not see the malediction she bears on her face?"

Medji involuntarily covered the stars with her two hands.

"What does that matter? She is weak, and a woman, and entitled to hospitality."

"She is accursed, master. She is a sorceress. She will cast an evil eye on our men and on our beasts. Take care! We shall leave you!"

"Leave me, then," said Monte-Cristo, gravely, "for I never will refuse hospitality to any one who seeks it."

And as Medji shivered with terror, he said to her, gently:

"Do not be frightened, you have uttered a name that makes you sacred in my eyes. As to you," he continued, addressing the Arab, "if you speak in your name I will pay and dismiss you. If you speak in the

name of your comrades, I bid you go to them and say that Monte-Cristo, who conquers lions, is not afraid of men. Leave me here in the desert, if you will, I shall not turn back."

The other Arabs heard these words, their enthusiasm was not yet extinct, and they again burst into wild applause.

"I shall not remain," said the Arab. "I will not stay near the sorceress!"

"Very good! Jacopo, give this man twice what is due to him, and tell him that in France we do not believe in sorceresses; we worship God."

And the Count entered his tent.

"Esperance," he said, "lie down and rest, I shall be near. And Medji, I am ready to listen to you. First answer my questions. You know Captain Joliette?"

"He saved my life; that life I consecrate to him."

"He is a prisoner, you say. Who are his foes? They are powerful."

Medji shivered.

"They are the Aissaouas; they fear nothing; they stand on red-hot iron; they wear daggers thrust into their flesh, and they sing all the time."

"Are they the masters of Ouargla?"

"Master, let me tell my story. Be patient as thou art strong!"

"Go on, but first tell me that, in order to save Joliette, it is not necessary to start at once."

"Alas! master, dost thou not know that none of these Arabs will follow you further?"

"I can go without them."

"No, for thou wilt need men."

"Captain Joliette is living? You know this?"

"Yes, but he is suffering; he has neither air nor light, and I would give my life to spare him one pang."

Monte-Cristo well remembered that she had vanished the day that Joliette had disappeared. Was she what she claimed to be, or were the enemy using her as a blind? No, it was impossible· her passionate exaltation was too real.

"You love Captain Joliette?" he asked, quickly.

"As the child loves him who guides her unsteady feet, as the vine loves the tall palm that shelters it."

"But why did that Arab refuse to stay where you were? Why do you bear on your face the sign of terrible sect?"

"You know then!" exclaimed the young girl, tears filling her eyes.

"I know," answered the Count, "that an association of murderers use that mark as their sign—the sign of the Khouans."

"Listen to me," she cried passionately, "and I implore you to belive me for the sake of the man you wish to save, and for his sake also," and she extended her hand toward Esperance.

The Count started.

"Go on," he said, abruptly.

"My father," began the girl, "was a powerful chief he was respected by the tribe. The French—your people, I believe—set their feet on our land. My father gathered his people about him, and they fought

for our land until a certain day came. There had been a fight between the Europeans and my father's tribe. Suddenly a cry of horror was heard; the enemy were upon them. The men took refuge in a cave in the rocks. A Marabout who was with them said that Allah had heard their prayers, and had opened a subterranean path for them. The Marabout made a sign to the French, who immediately gathered about the entrance to the cave. The men ran hastily on to find the subterranean egress, and fell over a precipice so deep that the eye could not distinguish the bottom. My father, who was the last, was saved, with some fifty men. He went to the entrance of the cavern alone and unarmed. He was shot; no one knew who fired that gun. The officer in command ran forward to stop the firing. 'Who are you?' he said to my father; 'what do you want?' 'The lives of my men. 'And what do you offer in exchange?' 'My own life and my oath.' 'What oath?' 'That no man of the tribe of Ben-Ali-Serrah shall again bear arms against France.' 'I accept your promise, but remember that should one of your men fire a single shot they will be all exterminated!' My father, with the ball in his breast, returned to the cave, and in a loud, clear voice, ordered his men to come out and surrender their arms to him, and this was done. My father received the weapons, and then handed them over to the French. There were fifty-two men left, and when the last had come out my father, leaning against a rock, said to them: 'I have sworn, brothers, that never again will you bear arms against the French. Will you respect

my oath?' They all swore. Then my father turned to the French officer, and said: 'I have kept my promise. Do you keep yours? Fire.' But the Frenchman had a grand nature; he took my father's hand 'France wants friends, not slaves,' he said. 'Be our ally.' And from this day not a man of our tribe has fought against your country, we have kept that oath through much sorrow and tribulation. My father recovered slowly from his wound. He had many troubles: the tribes of the desert called him a renegade, because of the oath he had taken, and the Khouans swore vengeance against him. One day, five years later, a great French general came to make my father a visit, for we were friendly with thy people, and it was a great *fetè*. At night-fall the French general departed, accompanied a certain distance by some of the soldiers. All became quiet in our homes after their departure. Suddenly we were awakened by a terrible noise. My father rushed into my room, he took me in his arms. He was wounded. He struggled a moment, and then falling on the floor cried, 'the Khouans!' He was dead. We flung ourselves on his body, only to be torn away by rude hands. I was fastened to a horse and driven across the desert. Out of the darkness came a voice crying my name. It was my mother, a prisoner like myself. We stopped at a ruin where the prisoners were put to the torture. How did I live through that scene!—and my blessed mother, when she was dying, after exhausted nature could bear no more, said aloud, 'Medji, avenge us. Remember your father's oath.' I lay half dead. One

of the executioners came to me. I was the last, and knew that my hour had come, but the chief rushed forward, and before these other hands had touched me I felt a sharp pain on my face, and a voice said: 'Allah forbids you to touch this virgin; she is marked with the sign of the Saints.' Then all these rough men, to my terror, prostrated themselves before me. Why had this chief saved me? I knew not I was placed under the care of some old women, who talked perpetually of my divine mission, for I was destined to bear the standard of the prophet. Then I was often seized with a strange intoxication, followed by convulsions. Incoherent words fell from my lips, and I felt the stars on my cheeks burn with ever renewed pain. The women had drugged me, as I afterward learned. The respect with which I was treated increased daily. I was the Sorceress, the child of Allah. It was on the eve of their murderous expeditions that I was thus placed under the influence of drugs, and the words that escaped my unconscious lips were looked upon as omens and prophecies. But when I was sixteen the chief, who had saved my life, came to my tent. He insulted me, and I told him that if he ever laid his hand upon me I would kill myself. Dissimulating his rage, he left me, but I determined to fly. It was long before a favorable opportunity presented itself, but then I fled. I was in the desert, I knew not where to go, but I looked at the stars. One day I was attacked by a panther. The man who saved me was Captain Joliette. Then came a brief season of joy and repose, and I was happy. He treated me not like a slave, but

like a dear sister, and each day I venerated him more Sometimes he taught me a little of his own tongue, and I taught him some phrases of mine. His brother officers frightened me sometimes by the way they looked at me, but there was one soldier, named Coucon, who loved Captain Joliette, and whom I loved too; he was kind, and he made me laugh. One night I awoke with a start. It seemed to me that some one was near me. I opened my eyes and I saw a black form vanish among the folds of the tent I sprang from my rug and saw, with terror, that the tent had been cut from top to bottom. It was true, then, some one had been there."

When Medji uttered these words the Count of Monte-Cristo started. This was the same dream that Esperance had had. He looked timidly toward the couch where the boy lay, as doubting his being there.

"Go on," he said.

Medji obeyed.

"I slept no more, but determined to see the Captain at daylight. But with the dawn I hesitated, for when I left my tent I saw that the Captain was going off on some expedition. I ran to him and implored him not to go, but I did not tell him of the vision of the night. What folly this was! He kissed my brow, and cried 'Forward' to his men, and I was left to despair. That evening I went a few steps down the road he had gone. I was seized and thrown upon a horse. I heard a voice—a voice I knew—and it said: 'Medji! you will never again escape!' We were three days crossing the desert, and when I came to myself we were at Ouargla.

Oh! what an awful place it is! There I was again surrounded by the same women who had tried to make me a prophetess. I determined to kill myself first. The second day that I was at Ouargla, however, I changed my mind; for, standing on the point of my toes, I could look through the barred hole that did duty for a window, and I beheld, lying on a litter, a man borne by Arabs; this man was Captain Joliette—pale and unconscious! I uttered a shriek and shook the iron bars with all my strength. I was pulled back by the horrible wretch who had before dared to speak of love to me. This man then said: 'Medji! the man who stole you has fallen into our hands!' 'And you will kill him, coward?' The Aissaoua smiled. 'No, not yet. Look out again, Medji.' I looked, and saw the procession carry the litter through a low iron door.

"'He will be placed in a dark cell,' said my persecutor, 'and this Christian, as you call him, will remain there month after month, until he longs for death.' I turned quickly. 'And what do you intend to do with me?' I asked. 'I intend to bask in your smiles,' he replied, with a sardonic smile. God forgive me for the infamous bargain I then made. 'Give this man his liberty,' I said; 'give him an escort back to his people, and I am yours!' He hesitated, but I knew my power; and I obliged him to take a solemn oath. He in his turn compelled me to do the same. 'Go!' I then said. 'When you have redeemed your word, come back.' He went, and I stood at the window, hour after hour. The fatal door was never opened. It was not until the fourth day that I learned the truth. An order from

the Sheik forbade the setting at liberty of any prisoner, and the man for whom I had made my oath quarreled with the others and was killed. Strangely enough, he died without betraying me as the person who had demanded that this prisoner should be set at liberty. This was a terrible blow to me. I was ready to make any sacrifice, but it was useless. Finally a strange rumor reached me, that a Marabout was preaching immediate massacre, and I did not know whether the Captain was living or dead. I began to have visions again, and in one of them I heard a voice saying: 'Look! look! and you will find him.' I was free to go about Ouargla as I pleased, and I determined to go out one evening and take advantage of the strange veneration in which I was still held. I wrapped myself in my bournous. When the sentinel saw me, he trembled. I went to him and said a few strange words that came into my head, and the man threw down his weapons and fled. I left Ouargla and wandered into the desert. Allah guided me to thee."

"The voice of Duty guided you to me, my child," answered the Count. "You have come, and it is well."

"And you will save him?"

"If God gives me the power!" answered the Count.

"Then we must start at once. I will be your guide. Hasten with your orders."

Monte-Cristo went out, and calling Jacopo, gave him some instructions.

"Send all cowards away," he said. "Get rid of them at once."

At this moment a discharge of musketry was heard,

and Monte-Cristo rushed forward, followed by Coucon and about fifty men. Bullets whistled through the air. The camp seemed to be surrounded. Monte Cristo thundered out his orders. But suddenly the assailants seemed to pause. A long, shrill cry was heard, and this cry ended in a demoniac shriek of laughter; and as if this were a signal, all the shadowy horsemen turned and galloped away.

What did this mean? Monte-Cristo stood thinking for a moment, then with a hoarse shout he sprang to the tent. He understood the whole dismal truth. The couch was empty; Esperance was not there. Monte-Cristo lost his self-command entirely. He ran wildly through the camp, calling for his boy. The attack was only feigned; these bandits had in this way accomplished their purpose of stealing his boy. The strong man wept. He felt a hot tear on his hand, and looked at it with surprise. He shook his head like a lion awakening from his slumbers. Then he shouted:

"To horse! To horse! To Ouargla!"

CHAPTER LIII.

"COURAGE!"

WE left Captain Joliette just as the crowd of demons broke into the dungeon, where they found him erect, with arms folded on his breast. The Marabout excited his men with fanatical words; he did not wish them to kill him, he wished them to torture him.

They seized Albert and dragged him up the stairs, he realizing that they were rising to a purer atmosphere.

"Kill him! Kill him!" shouted the crowd. But who was to give the signal?

The Marabout said, in a loud voice: "There is no God but God!"

These words have an almost magical power on the Arabs. The crowd fell back as the Marabout laid his hand on the head of the victim, and the people fell back to make room for a number of creatures who looked almost like phantoms. They were dressed in long white bournous, marked on one side with the six-pointed star in scarlet lines. Their heads were uncovered, their faces emaciated, and their eyes glittering with fever.

"The Khouans! The Khouans!" was the fright

ened murmur, running through the crowd, who prostrated themselves with ejaculations of "Allah!"

Captain Joliette was himself once more, and he watched the Marabout lift the hem of the Khouan chief, and press his lips upon it. A long silence followed this act of deference, and the Khouans themselves stood like statues.

The Chief advanced to the French officer. "Enemy of Allah! are you ready for death?"

The Captain replied, calmly: "Since there are among the Arabs, murderers so cowardly that they are ready to strike an unarmed man—I am ready!"

"Cowardly!" answered the Khouan, "do you not know that the Brothers bear tortures without a moan, that would make you howl with agony?"

"Jugglery!" answered Albert, contemptuously.

"You think so? Come here;" and he motioned to one of the Brothers, who threw off his bournous and stood before the Frenchman.

Albert became sick with horror.

Tall and frightfully thin, the Khouan's shoulders and body were pierced with daggers—hacked with knives, and from these inflamed wounds drops of black blood were slowly oozing. The Khouan, without a muscle in his face quivering, seized one of these knives and turned it around in the wound.

The Chief advanced and tore out one of the knives; he held it toward Albert.

"Take this," he said, "and end your miserable life!"

Albert smiled. "No, my life belongs to God and my country!"

"Ah! You are afraid! Perhaps you prefer fire to iron?"

He made another sign; another Khouan came forward. A brazier of burning coals was brought; the Brother took one and laid it on his forehead; he placed other coals on his thighs and breast, and then, seized with frenzy, trampled on the coals.

The Chief seized Albert's arm. "Unless you are a coward," he cried, "plunge your hand into that fire!"

"If my hand had been faithless to me," answered Captain Joliette, coldly, "I should not hesitate to punish it; but it has loyally obeyed me, and I refuse!'

Then turning to the Khouans, he said: "Give me a dagger, a yataghan, and I will prove to you that I am no coward!"

"Kill him! Kill him!"

"You are murderers and fanatics!" continued the Captain.

"Silence!" said the Khouan. Then raising his hand, he called out: "Bring out the other prisoners!"

Albert started. What! were there other human beings, brothers and soldiers, sighing like himself in that terrible prison?

Albert was tied to a post, and he saw that he was to be made to witness the tortures of his countrymen.

The doors of the subterranean passages were thrown open, and the Captain saw human forms emerge from the obscurity. There were thirty, and all Frenchmen, and in what a condition!

Soldiers in ragged uniforms, with faces pallid and worn, making superhuman efforts like Captain Joliette

to hold their heads proudly. There were poor colonists, torn from their work in the fields, and mourned for by women and children, who would never see them more. Not one of all these showed the smallest weakness. As the soldiers passed Albert they recognized his epaulettes, and cheered him. "Vive la France!" they shouted. Albert could not return their military salute, for his hands were tied. Suddenly his attention was attracted by a very singular looking person. He was dressed in the costume of a dandy of the day. Pantaloons of a Scotch plaid, a silk vest and gilt buttons—but two details were not in keeping; he wore varnished boots and a crush hat of eccentric shape—the fashion of 1848. His costume, it must be admitted, was far from fresh. He was tall and ridiculously thin, his moustaches were enormous, his mouth large and smiling, his manner almost insolent. As he passed the Sheik he said, in French:

"Excuse me, if I do not lift my hat to you, you old rascal!"

As he reached the Captain, his face changed.

"Captain," he said, quickly. "By all the Saints of Paradise, you shall not die!"

"Ah! it was you then—"

"Yes, it was I. Gratillet, journalist and friend of your friend Beauchamp. We shall be killed to-morrow in all probability, but we will make a fight for it."

Albert shook his head. Not die! These were easy words to say, but what could be done?

Presently the clamor broke forth fiercer than ever, and then began the tortures of the prisoners, and

each time one succumbed in his agony the crowd shouted in delirious triumph. Twenty-four of the Frenchmen had died, but the journalist whom chance had placed last in the circle of victims, was still unharmed.

Five only were left, when Gratillet fell flat on the ground. What had struck him, no report had been heard? Before Albert could think clearly on this point, a great noise was heard in the town. The Khouans, seeming to forget their principal victim, all rushed away, waving their blood-stained arms. It was now twilight, and Albert could but dimly see a long procession advancing through the streets of Ouargla. A man rode on horseback a little distance in advance; he wore a green turban which only those have a right to wear who have made a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Who could this man be? As Albert asked himself this question, he heard a voice in his ear, the same voice that had said he should not die.

The Arab wearing the green turban was Maldar, who had come across the sea in Monte-Cristo's yacht; his name was really Mohammed-ben-Abdallah, he who had sworn an implacable hatred to Europeans. His hypocrisy had temporarily deceived them, and while he was lulling their caution to sleep he was preparing a vast conspiracy. He had called to his aid the sinister Brotherhood, and had persuaded them that he received mysterious communications from Allah. It was necessary, however, that he should invest himself with the peculiar sanctity of a pilgrimage to the tomb

of the Prophet, and he departed. He had been gone a year, and his return was to be the signal for the extermination of the invaders, but the work of blood had begun when he entered the gates of Ouargla.

Bitterly aggrieved, he raised his angry voice.

"Faithless that ye are!" he cried, "could you not bide my coming? The prisoners were not yours, they were only confided to your keeping. Allah commands obedience to his High Priests. I came with good tidings, tidings of liberty. Tremble lest Allah withdraws the light of his countenance from you, and leaves you in shameful servitude!"

The cowards who had been engaged in their bloody work, trembled and slunk away like whipped hounds. He dismissed them with contempt, and was left alone in one of the temples with the Marabout and the Sheik.

"You have not understood my plan," he said. "I have lived long enough among these accursed Christians to understand them. We must hold a large number of prisoners, and so make ourselves feared. You have not obeyed me, and have retarded the deliverance of our country. Where is the lad that my faithful men took possession of? Bring him here!"

The two Khouans bowed low, and vanished.

In a few minutes the door opened, and Esperance appeared. The child was pale, but his eyes were fearless.

"Come hither," said Maldar. "What is your name?"

"By what right do you question me?" asked the boy, crossing his arms on his breast.

Maldar flushed with rage.

"By the right of superior strength," he replied, sternly. "Your name?"

"I have no reason to conceal it. It is Esperance."

"And your father's name?"

"I will gladly tell you it, for it will chase the color from your cheek. My father is called the Count of Monte-Cristo."

Maldar smiled at the boy's haughty tone.

"I know," he answered. "Your father is one of those men who think they can ride rough shod over every one. I at least will undeceive him. But is this Count of Monte-Cristo a chief in your land; does he have soldiers and ships under his command?"

"My father is a law unto himself," answered Esperance. "He is not a king, but he rules kings."

"This is such a hostage as I want," whispered Maldar to the Sheik; "his father will make any sacrifice to obtain this child."

Then addressing Esperance again, he asked if his father were not very rich.

"You ought to know," said Esperance, "since it was you who forced open his strong box."

These words cut Maldar like the lash of a whip. He rushed upon the child with his yataghan. The lad never moved, though his lip quivered, and beads of perspiration broke out on his white brow. Maldar did not strike him, however.

"You are brave," he said; "your father must love you well."

Esperance did not reply, but his face flushed at his father's name.

"And," continued Maldar, "proud as he is, you shall see him lying at my feet, imploring my mercy!"

He turned to the Sheik and said, angrily:

"Then all these accursed Frenchmen have been killed—not one escaped?"

"Not one," answered the Sheik.

"I think," interrupted the Marabout, "that the one who was fastened to the post did not die."

"You speak the words of truth. He still awaits his punishment."

"Which I alone can administer," said Maldar, with a frown. "Who is this prisoner?"

"A French officer, named Joliette."

At this name Esperance uttered a cry of amazement, for he knew that it was for him that the Captain had braved the perils of the Desert. Maldar also knew the interest Monte-Cristo felt in this soldier, and smiled sardonically.

"Ah! indeed. It is well that he should have been spared. Go! bring that prisoner here."

The Sheik went out and Maldar began to walk up and down like a caged lion.

"At last," he said, "I can begin the contest. Who can resist the elect of the Lord?"

Then taking some parchments from his breast, he began to study them, while Esperance, the worthy son of his father, waited patiently. Not a complaint had he uttered since he was stolen from his father's tent.

"Master!" cried the Sheik, coming back, "he is

gone! He was tied to the post; his bonds are cut—he is gone!"

"Gone!" exclaimed Maldar, as soon as he could speak for rage; "I will make you smart for your folly. But it is impossible that he can have gone far. Send out scouts and bring him back. If within an hour's time he is not here, woe betide you! And now, take that boy and lock him in the iron chamber."

CHAPTER LIV

FLIGHT.

BY what miracle had Albert escaped? We must go back to the moment when Maldar was first seen in the street at the head of the procession. It will not be forgotten that the journalist, Gratillet, had fallen on the ground before the square was vacated. He waited until the vultures, attracted by the odor of blood and emboldened by the silence, had begun their fearful work; when, as one alighted on his shoulders, he shook it off, crying, as he sprang to his feet:

"Who invited you to my table?"

Shaking himself, the journalist went to Albert, who, exhausted by lack of food and the terrors of the day, was in a state of torpor.

"Captain, rouse yourself!" said Gratillet. "You see that we are living. We are saved by a miracle. I saw that they were getting confused and I tumbled over, and then they said something and ran away. With your permission, we will do the same. First, to cut these ropes. Zounds! I have no knife!"

He worked on, however.

"First, let me introduce myself! Gratillet, Henri Gratillet, thirty-three years of age, and a journalist; came to Algeria for the newspaper edited by your friend

Beauchamp—taken prisoner by the Bedouins—shut up in that dungeon above yours—found out you were there—told you you would not die—kept my word!"

He chattered as gayly as if no such things as Arabs and yataghans existed, until the last knot was loosened, and Albert bore his weight on his benumbed feet.

"And now we must be off!" said the journalist, nipping Albert's thanks in the bud.

"Impossible!" answered Albert, "for I am utterly exhausted; I have not eaten a mouthful for forty-eight hours!"

"And I do not happen to have a beefsteak about me! But I have an idea!"

He ran to the slain and searched their pockets; in one he found a roll, and in the belt of another a bottle that contained a couple of glasses of rum.

"Swallow this!" he cried, returning to Albert, "and eat the bread with it or else you will be as tipsy as a fool!"

The spirits had a wonderful effect. Albert presently expressed a wish to start.

"Where the devil are we to go? that is the question," answered the puzzled journalist, "but as these amiable Arabs went to the right we may as well go to the left; the beasts seem to be busy just now."

The journalist had in his energy stepped too near the edge of the elevation on which they stood; the ground crumbled under his feet and he rolled down the hill.

"Look here," he said, as he picked himself up, "there is a path here, Captain; my fall was a happy inspiration! It is slippery though. Look out!"

The two men crawled carefully along until the path came to an end. A steep precipice fell from their feet; it was clear that the path they had trodden was merely a dried-up stream.

"We must go back," said Albert.

"Never; it would be instant death."

"Then let us go on; that may be death too."

"Very good. I never saw an abyss without a bottom; the only difference between them is the distance one has to fall to reach that bottom!"

"I have a long scarf twisted round my waist," said Albert. "We may do something with that."

"Yes, if it is strong enough." And Gratillet seated himself comfortably, and waited until Albert handed him the scarf.

"Good. Now I shall hang on this scarf, and explore that dark hole with my legs."

"But I do not choose you to run all the risks."

"I dare say, but as I have saved your life it belongs to me. Your hand is not steady enough either. By the way, where is that rum? We had best drink it now in equal shares."

This done, Gratillet fastened the scarf to his wrists and wound it about a stone, and then hung himself out into space.

"This won't do!" he exclaimed, presently. "The rock is so sharp that it is cutting the scarf." As he spoke the scarf parted, and the journalist fell. At the same moment, a rapid discharge of musketry was heard in the direction of the mountains.

CHAPTER LV.

THE CITADEL.

"FORWARD!" Monte-Cristo shouted, as he leaped to his saddle. His energy had returned.

The thing he most feared, was treachery in his camp. It was plain that the adversaries were well informed of all his movements, and he had now not more than fifty men left, for when the Arabs heard the words "To Ouargla," all their superstitious fears awoke, for all who were not allied with the Khouans were afraid of the Brotherhood.

Medji mounted a horse and followed Monte-Cristo, who did not at first see her, and when he did, he turned quickly, and said with some harshness:

"Why are you here, traitress!"

"My lord!" she replied, as pale as death and tears streaming from her eyes, "why do you suspect me?"

Monte-Cristo felt ashamed of his injustice, for he knew human nature so well that he recognized her sincerity.

"Forgive me, child, but I am in agony. My son is gone."

"Courage, master, our horses are flying, and we will come down on the Khouans like a thunderclap!"

The Count questioned the girl closely and she

replied without hesitation, until he asked what these people would probably do to the child. Medji knew that they were without mercy and she could not answer.

They stopped at midday to rest their horses, and then on again, until at last they beheld the minarets of Ouargla.

Monte-Cristo divided his men into two bands. At the head of one was the Count, Jacopo, and Medji. The other was commanded by Coucon.

Their approach had doubtless been signalled, because they saw horsemen emerge from the gate like bees from a hive. They approached with wild cries, and the fusillade began some hundred yards from the gates. Each discharge from the Count and his men told, and the Arabs bit the dust with fierce maledictions.

Monte-Cristo rode up to the town and leaped the trench that surrounded it, and when the inhabitants of Ouargla beheld this tall man sitting his horse as if cast in bronze, and passing unharmed through the shower of balls, they were seized with a panic.

They beheld Medji, who with streaming hair and flashing eyes, uttered in a loud voice mysterious words that caused the Faithful to shiver with fright.

The miserable creatures turned and fled. Coucon in the meantime, entered the eastern gate. The brave Zouave had many friends to avenge. His companions, carried away by his example, fought like tigers. They were mostly colonists who had been ruined by the invasions of the Khouans, who now showed such miserable cowardice.

Suddenly Monte-Cristo pulled up his horse; he had reached the citadel.

"He is there!" Medji had said.

It was dusk; to the tumult had succeeded an appalling quiet. The inhabitants of the town had shut themselves into their houses, abstaining from any hostile demonstration. And the Khouans who had fled had, by subterranean passages, taken refuge in the citadel.

Monte-Cristo deliberated as he looked up at the frowning walls wherein Esperance was doubtless awaiting him, and where Medji felt sure that Joliette was also immured. Who could say that the first attack on this building would not be the signal for a general massacre? Lights were moving about within and probably preparations were being made for a vigorous defence.

Suddenly Monte-Cristo turned to Coucou.

"Light the torches," he said, and he then himself mounted a pile of stones, his tall form perfectly visible by the light. And there in a voice like a bugle call, he shouted forth the words inscribed on the first page of the Koran.

"In the name of the Most Powerful and Most Merciful God!"

Three times he repeated these words, and then waited.

The noise of a great door opening was presently heard, and there stood Maldar, he also surrounded by torches. He repeated the words from the Koran, and then added:

"Who are you who comes here as an enemy?"

Monte-Cristo replied:

"Why do you speak of me as coming here as an enemy, when it was your soldiers who attacked me?"

"Blood has been shed," answered Maldar, sternly "And it is on your head. What do you want?"

"We want the prisoners, who were carried off by your cowardly men."

"They are dead!" answered Maldar.

"Dead!" repeated Monte-Cristo.

"Dead!" cried Medji, darting forward. "False servant of the Prophet, be forever accursed! Do you hear this?" she asked, turning toward the Zouave and his men. "Do you understand what this miserable impostor says? They have killed your French brothers."

"Then," answered Coucon, "they will have a pretty hard time of it the next hour!"

Monte-Cristo imposed silence by a gesture. He did not give the signal for an attack, because he could not yet induce his lips to utter one name.

At last he spoke.

"You who murder defenceless men, are you also cowardly enough to kill a child?"

Maldar laughed.

"Is my son dead?" asked the Count of Monte Cristo, burying his nails in his flesh as he spoke.

"No," answered Maldar, "he lives." And again he laughed in his sinister fashion.

Monte-Cristo could not speak for a moment, and then he said:

"You are Maldar. You have eaten of my bread

What harm have I ever done you? What crime of mine do you punish in my son?"

"The crime of being a Frenchman!"

"But you have served France yourself!"

"Only until the hour of vengeance came!"

"What will you do with my child?"

"That you shall yourself decide. Come within. The doors of the Citadel shall open before you—but before you alone. And when you are with me we two will fix the ransom for your son."

"Do not go, master!" cried Medji, who had understood these words, "do not go, it is a snare!"

The Count of Monte-Cristo slowly descended the mound on which he stood, and went to the door.

CHAPTER LVI.

MONTE-CRISTO BECOMES DANTES AGAIN

"I AM here, and alone!" cried the Count of Monte-Cristo, in a loud voice. The door opened. The Khouans stood in the court-yard, which was so dimly lighted that he could not guess their number. Monte-Cristo passed through them, and involuntarily the words of the Italian poet occurred to him:

"Lasceate ogni speranza, voi chi entrate qui."

Maldar, in his green bournous, awaited him; his face and fiery eyes seemed the incarnation of hatred. He preceded Monte-Cristo to the interior of the Citadel.

"Now," said the Count, "what ransom do you want for my son?"

"You love him, I suppose?"

"So well that I am ready to undergo any suffering, that he may go free. But a truce to idle words. You want gold, and I am rich; so rich, that I can maintain your army for years, and not know it; that I can buy this city, and not feel it any more than as if I had given alms to a beggar!"

Maldar started to his feet. "Not so; I am richer than you, because I hold in my hands the only wealth you prize—the life of your son!"

Monte-Cristo bowed his head. This man spoke the

truth. Of what value to him were gold and precious stones?

"That may be," he replied, "but you spoke of a ransom."

"Yes, but I did not say that it should be gold."

"I offered you my life."

"I have but to lift my finger, and your head would roll at my feet—"

"No; such treason would be a crime. You have given your word."

"Not so!" cried Maldar. "I hold to none of your stupid rules. I hold neither word nor oath sacred. You belong to me!"

"Your God teaches falsehood and treachery, then?" said Monte-Cristo, coldly. "My conscience tells me that only cowards take their enemies in a trap."

"I will break your cursed spirit!" said Maldar, angrily. He made a sign and one of the guard went out.

It seemed as if the wall opened, and afar off in the distance Monte-Cristo beheld Esperance held upon his knees by two Khouans, one of whom brandished a hatchet above his head.

"My son! My son!" murmured Monte-Cristo.

The boy seemed to hear, and extended his hands toward his father, and yet it was plain that he did not see him.

"If I raise my hand," hissed Maldar, "that hatchet will fall. If you choose, you can save your son. Speak! What I want from you is not gold, nor is it your life. I know who you are, I know that your

word is law, and that Frenchmen have confidence in you!"

Maldar went to a table. "Come here," he said, "come here and write."

Monte-Cristo looked at him, and then took his seat at the table. "Dictate," he said, "and I will write."

Maldar began:

"I, Count of Monte-Cristo, inform the Governor that I am in Ouargla, and that I have won the confidence of Maldar, the Sultan. Over a hundred persons, among them a number of French officers, are in the Citadel. The Khouans feel perfectly secure, and anticipate no attack. They are not numerous. The defile of Psab-el-Thor is not guarded. A band of energetic soldiers can surround the city, and success is certain."

Monte-Cristo wrote these lines without hesitation.

"Sign your name," said Maldar.

"One word first. I understand your object; you wish to draw the French troops into a snare, the defile will be guarded, and every Frenchman will be taken prisoner."

"You are right, and you will pay for your son's life with the lives of a hundred Frenchmen."

A chill dew broke out on Monte-Cristo's brow, and turning toward the place where he could still see Esperance, he cried aloud in agony of spirit:

"Child of my heart, listen to me; this man offers us life and liberty at the price of dishonor. Listen to this letter, which can save us."

And he read the letter.

"Tell me, Esperance, shall I sign these infamous words?"

The child struggled with the Arabs who held him, his lips moved, but no sound reached his father.

"You cannot hear his voice," said Maldar, "but if it pleases you to question him I do not object."

The vision faded, and in a few minutes the door opened and Esperance flung himself into his father's arms.

For a moment the father was happy. Presently he held his son from him, and looking into his eyes he said:

"And now speak. What am I to do?"

Esperance snatched the letter and tore it into bits.

"Let them kill us!" he cried.

The room in which this terrible drama went on was round, being a portion of a tower. This room opened into another by a heavy door. On the wall hung various instruments of torture. Monte-Cristo and Esperance were opposite the door; Maldar, however, was between it and them; he had several pistols in his belt. The Khouans, well armed, guarded the door.

When Maldar heard what Esperance said, he uttered an angry oath.

"Do you know that I can tear you limb from limb, boy?"

Maldar drew a pistol and pointed it at Esperance. Before he could draw the trigger the Count caught him by the arm and flung him among the Khouans.

"Fire! Fire!" shouted Maldar; "shoot them like dogs!"

The men obeyed. The room was full of smoke. Monte-Cristo threw Esperance on the ground, and then rushing to the door flung it to. In another minute he had piled the heavy chests, that were around the wall, one upon the other in front of this door. Maldar and the Khouans were without, and Monte-Cristo and his son unharmed. But what were these few minutes of respite? Monte-Cristo had no arms, and it would not be long ere the Khouans forced an entrance. Monte-Cristo snatched his son to his breast.

"I cannot see you die!" he cried. "God of Justice!" he said imploringly, "take my life, but spare my innocent boy."

Maldar's voice was heard without. It will be remembered that his long captivity had endowed Edmond Dantes with the singular power of seeing in the dark. He now suddenly remembered that the wall had seemed to open when he saw Esperance. He piled three more arm-chests in front of the door. Then he ran to the wall and felt all over it, but there did not seem to be the smallest crevice.

Suddenly Esperance whispered:

"Look up, father!"

Monte-Cristo raised his head, and high up beheld a faint white light.

"Esperance," he said quickly, "when you came here just now did you descend a staircase?"

"Yes; and I think the cell I occupied was over this, and the door opened on the staircase."

"And above?"

"The steps led to a terrace, where I was taken for the air."

There was no time to lose, for Maldar's voice was heard ordering a battering-ram to be brought. This order, the Count of Monte-Cristo reflected, would take some minutes to fulfil.

It was plain that there was a terrace above, and that the illusion which had shown him his son had been produced by reflections in mirrors arranged with the infernal skill of the Khouans. It was this place which might prove their salvation, could they reach it. The ceiling was not very high, and the Count began to pile tables and chairs one upon another. Then he took down a strange instrument from the wall—it was a bar of iron with a flat handle of wood. This he tied to his arm with his handkerchief. Esperance assisted him, but without understanding what his father meant to do. Then Monte-Cristo climbed upon the furniture he had piled together, and instantly saw that he had been correct in his impression; a large sheet of glass hid a square opening, and was fastened only by its own weight. He quickly raised it so that the passage was free. Then he assisted Esperance.

"Put your arms around my neck, child," he said, "and do not be afraid."

With his two hands he seized the frame that had sustained the glass. The weight he carried was enormous—the child and the iron bar—but he had regained all his marvellous vigor. He drew himself up by degrees and at last found himself in the room where Esperance had been imprisoned. The child had sprung from his

shoulders. Monte-Cristo, lying on the floor, displaced the scaffolding by which he had climbed, and then carefully replaced the sheet of glass. When Maldar entered the room below a few minutes later, he was long in discovering how the prisoners made their escape.

The door was open in the room above. Monte-Cristo glided to the stairs. He heard the Khouans below quarreling among themselves. The battering rams had been brought. The stairs were so narrow that only one person could pass at a time. It was now lighted by the torches of the Khouans below.

"Follow me," said Monte-Cristo to Esperance.

They climbed the stairs. A blast of hot air struck them full in the face. The night was a terrific one. Black clouds drifted over the sky and pale lightning rent them in twain. But this storm was of service to the fugitives. Monte-Cristo looked around, but there was no hope of escaping from this place. At that moment furious cries came from below. The Khouans had forced the door and found that the birds had flown. At the same moment a sentinel fired at Monte-Cristo. He had seen his dark form in a flash of lightning.

"Ah! we have them!" cried Maldar, rushing up the stairs.

Monte-Cristo heard them coming, and in this brief moment his whole life seemed to rise before him. He said aloud:

"I am not afraid to appear before the Judgment Seat!"

He embraced his son, and then said:

"Edmond Dantes, do your duty!"

He placed himself at the head of the winding stairs, armed only with the iron bar we have described. Where he stood he was sheltered from any ball. A Khouan appeared. The iron came down on his head and he fell. Others followed, and above the tumult rose Maldar's voice:

"Kill him! kill him! in the name of Allah!"

The narrow stone stairs re-echoed the pistol shots, and Monte-Cristo continued to deal his murderous blows, at the same time slowly retreating toward the terrace behind this barrier of dead bodies. Monte-Cristo's arm was losing its strength. One leg had been torn by a dagger, and a ball had wounded his left shoulder, and yet he continued to fight. The storm was still appalling. The Khouans pushed on and on. Monte-Cristo snatched one Arab and threw him over the parapet; his weapon was shivered by a ball, but he swore to himself that neither he nor Esperance should be taken alive. And when all hope had gone, Monte-Cristo took a sudden resolution. He seized Esperance in his arms, and was about to leap over the battlements, when he heard Coucon's voice rising above the tumult below. His assailants had vanished as by magic. He heard Maldar say:

"I will answer for those who are here!"

The stairs must be free, and yet what did Maldar mean by these words? He understood only too soon; for a blaze of light illuminated the building and rose like a wall before him.

Yes, Maldar had kept his word. He had scattered

powder over the stairs and had then thrown down a lighted torch. To pass through this fiery furnace was impossible, and Monte-Cristo returned to the terrace. The thunder and lightning continued, but the rain had ceased. Monte-Cristo again looked down on the scene below; the Khouans were fleeing in every direction. By the light of the increasing flames every face could be seen. Monte-Cristo knew that there was now no hope for him. Suddenly he heard a shout in another direction. A French voice called out:

"Courage! Monte-Cristo! Courage!"

The Count leaped upon the battlement and beheld a wonderful thing. A body of horsemen were clustered at the base of the tower, in a spot that seemed almost inaccessible. A clear, young voice, with an English accent, called out:

"Monte-Cristo, be not discouraged!"

"You shall not die!" cried another voice.

He recognized the voices, unless he was dreaming. One was that of Clary Elphys. And this was not all. Another voice said, in familiar tones:

"Courage! Monte-Cristo. My mother's son is here.'

And this man, the Count of Monte-Cristo, whom nothing ever amazed, was utterly confounded. He beheld a human form climbing up the wall. Monte-Cristo was watching this form breathlessly, when suddenly he heard a cry behind him. Maldar had crept up the stairs, and now stood over Esperance with his yataghan uplifted. How Monte Cristo snatched the weapon from the assassin's hand and flung Maldar over the battlements is impossible to

describe, but he did it. As he sank back exhausted, after this superhuman effort, a man leaped upon the terrace, crying:

"Save the child!"

He unwound a long rope that was wrapped about his waist, and with wonderful agility passed it under the boy's shoulders. Monte-Cristo looked at this stranger, who, with quick authority, had dropped the child over the battlement and was guiding the rope.

"Father! father! I am safe," cried Esperance.

"It is your turn," said the unknown, handing the rope to the Count.

"But you—"

"Never mind me—I am safe enough; but make haste, or this old tower will fall."

Monte-Cristo grasped the rope and slid to the rocks below. Looking up, he saw that the man was coming down, clinging merely with his hands and feet to the small projections of the tower. Monte-Cristo received him with open arms.

"Who are you, sir? You have saved my life. You have done more, you have saved the life of my son."

"I am a French colonist, sir, who has had many strange adventures. My name is Fanfar."

Coucon and his men ran to greet the Count.

"Is that man a monkey?" asked the Zouave.

He spoke of Fanfar, who laughed.

"I have been a rope dancer in my day," he said.

Miss Elphys went up to the Count.

"How thankful I am, sir," she said, gently, "that we arrived in time."

"And by what miracle are you here?" asked the Count.

Clary colored.

"I determined to follow you more closely," she said, "but I have been constantly betrayed and delayed by my guards, and I feared lest I should not succeed in saving—your son. But my good angel brought me in contact with Monsieur Fanfar, and as soon as he heard your name he swore to aid you. And to him belong all the credit and success."

"And now, I suppose, we may hope to return to France," said another voice.

"Madame Caraman!" shouted the Zouave.

"And it is for me, Count, that you have incurred all these dangers?"

Monte-Cristo looked earnestly at Albert as he spoke. He was the living image of his mother. He extended his arms. Albert flung himself into them.

"And now," he said, "let me present my preserver, or another of them," he added, with a faint smile.

Gratillet came forward.

"I beg ten thousand pardons, Count, for appearing in your presence, but we have had no time in these last two days to make a toilette."

Albert and Gratillet had, in fact, fallen into a small lake which was nearly dry, and landing, had walked on until they met Clary. When Monte-Cristo heard the name of the journalist, he exclaimed:

"Are you not a friend of Beauchamp?"

"Yes—and I am here on his business."

"Beauchamp particularly recommended you to me

but it seems that he would have been wiser, had he recommended me to you."

"But you are wounded!" cried Albert, noticing the stains on the Count's garments.

"Only scratched! But where is Jacopo?" asked the Count, turning to Coucon.

The Zouave shook his head sadly. Jacopo had been killed by one of the first balls, he said.

"He may not be dead!" answered the Count. "But Esperance, my son, what is the matter?"

The child, exhausted by all he had passed through, had fainted. Madame took him in her arms.

"Let me attend to him," she said, "I am a better nurse than you."

"A few days' rest in my house will be the best medicine he can have," interposed Fanfar.

Monte-Cristo hesitated a moment, and then hurried toward the place where the combat had taken place. He uttered an exclamation of horror, when he saw Medji lying senseless on the ground.

"Poor Medji!" he said.

"Medji!" repeated Albert.

"Yes," answered the Count, "the gentle girl who loved you so tenderly. I do not think," he added, as he leaned over, "that it is in the power of man to save her; but I can, at least, give her one minute of supreme joy."

He drew from his pocket Faria's elixir, and poured a few drops between the girl's teeth. She shivered from head to foot, and opened her eyes. She saw Albert. A beautiful smile illuminated her pale face.

"It is you," she murmured.

Her head fell back. She was dead. Alas! she was not the sole victim of this combat—twenty of Monte-Cristo's men lay dead, among them Jacopo. He had expiated his crime.

"May God have mercy on his soul!" said Monte-Cristo, solemnly.

"We must not linger here," said the French colonist. "The Khouans will return in force. You will accept my hospitality."

The Count of Monte-Cristo looked toward the group where Esperance was.

"Let us go!" he said.

CHAPTER LVII.

MYSTERY.

WHILE the Count of Monte-Cristo, on horseback, and having on one side Fanfar and on the other Albert, took the road that led to the farm of the French colonist, Coucon attached himself to the ladies. He was dizzy with joy at meeting Madame, who in his eyes was more beautiful than ever, though bronzed by the hot suns of Africa.

"We have had a terrible time, Coucon," said the lady. "We came to assist the Count in rescuing the son of our friend, Madame Mercédès. We took a vessel called the Crocodile, with such a captain!—a veritable cannibal. He promised everything, but when we arrived in Bôue, the Count had gone. I wanted to return to France, but Clary would not consent. Imagine a girl of that age buying camels, provisions, etc. I tell you she is a wonderful creature, as is shown by the fact that we finally started—ten Americans, Clary and I. We must not forget Minnie, the Captain's wife. We had been three days on the desert, when Minnie—'

"A very pretty name!" said the Zouave.

"Yes, but it does not belong to a very pretty woman. Well, Minnie, as I was saying, became violently jealous

of me. She and the Captain quarreled, and finally Minnie leaped upon a horse and disappeared."

"A very good thing for Wharton!" said the Zouave, philosophically.

"Ah! that is the way you talk about men and their wives, is it? Wharton did not seem to think so, for he went after her on another horse. Then the ten Americans vanished also, and we were left alone in the desert. The Arabs had already stolen the camels."

"A nice position, certainly!"

"Clary was naturally disheartened, but presently she picked up courage, and we decided to go on, hoping to come to some oasis, and for twenty-four hours we have been on the gallop! Suddenly we heard a pistol shot, and two men appeared—one about forty, the other a droll looking fellow, so thin and so tall. Clary spoke to them. We were lucky enough to find that they were French colonists. Monsieur Fanfar, for that was the name of the eldest, took us to his farm, where we were welcomed by a most charming woman. This Monsieur Fanfar says he has been a rope dancer, but he is no ordinary man I am sure He is Monte-Cristo No. 2."

"Oh! you are too enthusiastic!" grumbled Coucon, who considered this praise a disparagement of his master.

"We told him," continued Madame, "why we were in Africa, and nothing could equal this Fanfar's eagerness when he heard the Count's name. I must confess that I should have liked a little rest; but no, neither he nor Clary would listen to such an idea, and as, of

course, I would not be left behind, we are here; but I do hope the dear boy is not ill!"

Esperance had fallen into a strange state of prostration. His father watched him anxiously, and inquired the length of their journey of Fanfar.

This Fanfar was, as Madame had said, a man of about forty, admirably made, tall, and with a handsome, energetic face. His appearance, simple as was his costume, was as elegant as his manners.

Monte-Cristo examined him with great curiosity. He felt sure that there was a secret in the life of this man, who had thus buried himself in the desert.

Albert questioned Miss Elphys in regard to his mother.

Finally the party reached an oasis, and on a path leading to the house Monte-Cristo perceived a strange object, leaping about, and a lady, who held a child by the hand, came to meet them.

"What on earth is that?" asked the Count.

"That," said Fanfar, "is Bobichel."

"Bobichel?"

"Yes; he was once a clown, and is now pretending to be a frog to amuse my son."

Bobichel uttered a cry of joy.

"Bravo! master," he shouted. "Madame Irène is longing to see you. Come on, Caillette; come on Iron Jaws!"

Two more strange persons appeared—a giant and a woman.

Fanfar jumped from his horse to embrace his wife and child.

"We will first see to your son, Count," he said. "Irène, have a bed prepared; we have a great treasure to entrust to you."

Esperance was carried into the house, the Count of Monte-Cristo examined him carefully, and then drew a long breath of relief.

"He only needs rest, I think; but," he said, turning to Fanfar, "I do not like to abuse your kindness and hospitality."

"I beg, Count, that you will look upon me and mine as entirely at your service. But let me present my wife."

"Madame Fanfar," added the colonist, smiling, "is good enough to live with me in the desert. We have had bitter days, but they are over, I trust. And this is Iron Jaws," he continued, calling up the giant, who was as robust as a rugged old oak.

"He," said Fanfar, "can hold three hundred pounds at arm's length, and can lift a hogshead with his teeth. And now it is your turn, Bobichel. Make a bow, sir."

Bobichel obeyed, and literally touched his feet with his forehead.

The Count of Monte-Cristo laughed.

"What does this all mean?" he asked. "Is it true that you were a rope-dancer?"

"Perfectly true, Count, and we occasionally amuse ourselves in the same fashion."

Monte-Cristo was greatly puzzled. This man was distinguished looking, and Irène, his wife, was beautiful and refined. What did it all mean?

When seated at the family table, Monte-Cristo raised his glass.

"Monsieur Fanfar," he said, "I know not who you are, but when I drink to honest consciences and valiant hearts I know I am drinking to you."

"Ah! Monsieur Fanfar," cried the governess, "will you not tell us your story?"

"What do you say, Irène," asked the colonist of his wife.

"I have no objection," she replied.

While Esperance rested, Fanfar began his tale. As it was long, we will relate it in the second series and conclusion of "The Wife of Monte-Cristo," just issued under the name of "The Son of Monte-Cristo," a work which will be found to be more absorbingly interesting, if possible, than even this volume.

THE END.

THE MAN FROM ARCHANGEL.

On the fourth day of March, in the year 1867, I being at that time in my five-and-twentieth year, I wrote down the following words in my note-book—the result of much mental perturbation and conflict:—

"The solar system, amid a countless number of other systems as large as itself, rolls ever silently through space in the direction of the constellation of Hercules. The great spheres of which it is composed spin and spin through the eternal void ceaselessly and noiselessly. Of these one of the smallest and most insignificant is that conglomeration of solid and of liquid particles which we have named the earth. It whirls onward now as it has done before my birth, and will do after my death—a revolving mystery, coming none know whence, and going none know whither. Upon the outer crust of this moving mass crawl many mites, of whom I, John M'Vittie, am one, helpless, impotent, being dragged aimlessly through space. Yet such is the state of things among us that the little energy and glimmering of reason which I possess is entirely taken up with the labors which are necessary in order to procure certain metallic disks, wherewith I may purchase the chemical elements necessary to build up my ever-wasting tissues, and keep a roof over me to shelter me from the inclemency of the weather. I thus have no thought to expend upon the vital questions which surround me on every side. Yet, miserable entity as I am, I can still at times feel some degree of happiness, and am even—save the mark!—puffed up occasionally with a sense of my own importance."

These words, as I have said, I wrote down in my note-book, and they reflected accurately the thoughts which I found rooted far down in my soul, ever present and unaffected by the passing emotions of the hour. At last, however, came a time when my uncle, M'Vittie of Glencairn, died—the same who was at one time chairman of committees of the House of Commons. He divided his great wealth among his many nephews, and I found myself with sufficient to provide amply for my wants during the remainder of my life, and became at the same time owner of a bleak tract of land upon the coast of Caithness, which I think the old man must have bestowed upon me in derision, for it was sandy and valueless, and he had ever a grim sense of humor. Up to this time I had been an attorney in a midland town in England. Now I saw that I could put my thoughts into effect, and, leaving all petty and sordid aims, could elevate my mind by the study of the secrets of nature. My departure from my English home was somewhat accelerated by the fact that I had nearly slain a man in a quarrel, for my temper was fiery, and I was apt to forget my own strength when enraged. There was no legal action in the matter, but the papers yelped at me, and folk looked askance when I met them. It ended by my cursing them and their vile, smoke-polluted town, and hurrying to my northern possession, where I might at last find peace and an opportunity for solitary study and contemplation. I borrowed from my capital before I went, and so was able to take with me a choice collection of the most modern philosophical instruments and books, together with chemicals and such other things as I might need in my retirement.

The land which I had inherited was a narrow strip, consisting mostly of sand, and extending for rather over two miles round the coast of Mansie Bay, in Caithness. Upon this strip there had been a rambling, gray-stone building —when erected or wherefore none could tell me—and this

I had repaired, so that it made a dwelling quite good enough for one of my simple tastes. One room was my laboratory, another my sitting-room, and in a third, just under the sloping roof, I slung the hammock in which I always slept. There were three other rooms, but I left them vacant, except one which was given over to the old crone who kept house for me. Save the Youngs and the M'Leods, who were fisher-folk living round at the other side of Fergus Ness, there were no other people for many miles in each direction. In front of the house was the great bay, behind it were two long barren hills, capped by other loftier ones beyond. There was a glen between the hills, and when the wind was from the land it used to sweep down this with a melancholy sough and whisper among the branches of the fir-trees beneath my attic window.

I dislike my fellow-mortals. Justice compels me to add that they appear for the most part to dislike me. I hate their little crawling ways, their conventionalities, their deceits, their narrow rights and wrongs. They take offense at my brusque outspokenness, my disregard for their social laws, my impatience of all constraint. Among my books and my drugs in my lonely den at Mansie I could let the great drove of the human race pass onward with their politics and inventions and tittle-tattle, and I remained behind stagnant and happy. Not stagnant either, for I was working in my own little groove, and making progress. I have reason to believe that Dalton's atomic theory is founded upon error, and I know that mercury is not an element.

During the day I was busy with my distillations and analyses. Often I forgot my meals, and when old Madge summoned me to my tea I found my dinner lying untouched upon the table. At night I read Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant—all those who have pried into what is unknowable. They are all fruitless and empty, barren of re-

sult, but prodigal of polysyllables, reminding me of men who, while digging for gold, have turned up many worms, and then exhibit them exultantly as being what they sought. At times a restless spirit would come upon me, and I would walk thirty and forty miles without rest or breaking fast. On these occasions, when I used to stalk through the country villages, gaunt, unshaven and disheveled, the mothers would rush into the road and drag their children indoors, and the rustics would swarm out of their pot-houses to gaze at me. I believe that I was known far and wide as the "mad laird o' Mansie." It was rarely, however, that I made these raids into the country, for I usually took my exercise upon my own beach, where I soothed my spirit with strong black tobacco, and made the ocean my friend and my confidant.

What companion is there like the great restless, throbbing sea? What human mood is there which it does not match and sympathize with? There are none so gay but that they may feel gayer when they listen to its merry turmoil, and see the long green surges racing in, with the glint of the sunbeams in their sparkling crests. But when the gray waves toss their heads in anger, and the wind screams above them, goading them on to madder and more tumultuous efforts, then the darkest-minded of men feels that there is a melancholy principle in nature which is as gloomy as his own thoughts. When it was calm in the bay of Mansie the surface would be as clear and bright as a sheet of silver, broken only at one spot some little way from the shore, where a long black line projected out of the water looking like the jagged back of some sleeping monster. This was the top of the dangerous ridge of rocks known to the fishermen as the "ragged reef o' Mansie." When the wind blew from the east the waves would break upon it like thunder, and the spray would be tossed far over my house and up to the hills behind. The bay itself was a bold and noble one, but too much exposed

to the northern and eastern gales, and too much dreaded for its reef, to be much used by mariners. There was something of romance about this lonely spot. I have lain in my boat upon a calm day, and peering over the edge I have seen far down the flickering, ghostly forms of great fish—fish, as it seemed to me, such as naturalist never knew, and which my imagination transformed into the genii of that desolate bay. Once, as I stood by the brink of the waters upon a quiet night, a great cry, as of a woman in hopeless grief, rose from the bosom of the deep, and swelled out upon the still air, now sinking and now rising, for a space of thirty seconds. This I heard with my own ears.

In this strange spot, with the eternal hills behind me and the eternal sea in front, I worked and brooded for more than two years unpestered by my fellow men. By degrees I had trained my old servant into habits of silence, so that she now rarely opened her lips, though I doubt not that when twice a year she visited her relations in Wick, her tongue during those few days made up for its enforced rest. I had come almost to forget that I was a member of the human family, and to live entirely with the dead whose books I pored over, when a sudden incident occurred which threw all my thoughts into a new channel.

Three rough days in June had been succeeded by one calm and peaceful one. There was not a breath of air that evening. The sun sank down in the west behind a line of purple clouds, and the smooth surface of the bay was gashed with scarlet streaks. Along the beach the pools left by the tide showed up like gouts of blood against the yellow sand, as if some wounded giant had toilfully passed that way, and had left these red traces of his grievous hurt behind him. As the darkness closed in, certain ragged clouds which had lain low on the eastern horizon coalesced and formed a great irregular cumulus. The glass was still low, and I knew that there was mischief brewing. About

nine o'clock a dull moaning sound came up from the sea, as from a creature who, much harassed, learns that the hour of suffering has come round again. At ten a sharp breeze sprang up from the eastward. At eleven it had increased to a gale, and by midnight the most furious storm was raging which I ever remember upon the weather-beaten coast.

As I went to bed the shingle and seaweed were pattering up against my attic window, and the wind was screaming as though every gust were a lost soul. By that time the sounds of the tempest had become a lullaby to me. I knew that the gray walls of the old house would buffet it out, and for what occurred in the world outside I had small concern. Old Madge was usually as callous to such things as I was myself. It was a surprise to me when, about three in the morning, I was awakened by the sound of a great knocking at my door and excited cries in the wheezy voice of my housekeeper. I sprang out of my hammock, and roughly demanded of her what was the matter.

"Eh, maister, maister!" she screamed in her hateful dialect. 'Come doun, mun; come doun! There's a muckle ship gaun ashore on the reef, and the puir folks are a' yammerin' and ca'in' for help—and I doobt they'll a' be drooned. Oh, Maister M'Vittie, come doun!"

"Hold your tongue, you hag!" I shouted back in a passion. "What is it to you whether they are drowned or not? Get back to your bed and leave me alone." I turned in again and drew the blankets over me. "Those men out there," I said to myself, "have already gone through half the horrors of death. If they be saved they will but have to go through the same once more in the space of a few brief years. It is best, therefore, that they should pass away now, since they have suffered that anticipation which is more than the pain of dissolution." With this thought in my mind I endeavored to compose myself to sleep once more, for that philosophy which had taught me

to consider death as a small and trivial incident in man's eternal and ever-changing career, had also broken me of much curiosity concerning worldly matters. On this occasion I found, however, that the old leaven still fermented strongly in my soul. I tossed from side to side for some minutes endeavoring to beat down the impulses of the moment by the rules of conduct which I had framed during months of thought. Then I heard a dull roar amid the wild shriek of the gale, and I knew that it was the sound of a signal-gun. Driven by an uncontrollable impulse, I rose, dressed, and having lighted my pipe, walked out on to the beach.

It was pitch dark when I came outside, and the wind blew with such violence that I had to put my shoulder against it and push my way along the shingle. My face pringled and smarted with the sting of the gravel which was blown against it, and the red ashes of my pipe streamed away behind me, dancing fantastically through the darkness. I went down to where the great waves were thundering in, and shading my eyes with my hands to keep off the salt spray, I peered out to sea. I could distinguish nothing, and yet it seemed to me that shouts and great inarticulate cries were borne to me by the blasts. Suddenly as I gazed I made out the glint of a light, and then the whole bay and the beach were lighted up in a moment by a vivid blue glare. They were burning a colored signal-light on board of the vessel. There she lay on her beam ends right in the center of the jagged reef, hurled over to such an angle that I could see all the planking of her deck. She was a large two-masted schooner, of foreign rig, and lay perhaps a hundred and eighty or two hundred yards from the shore. Every spar and rope and writhing piece of cordage showed up hard and clear under the livid light which sputtered and flickered from the highest portion of the forecastle. Beyond the doomed ship out of the great darkness came the long rolling lines of black waves, never

ending, never tiring, with a petulant tuft of foam here and there upon their crests. Each as it reached the broad circle of unnatural light appeared to gather strength and volume and to hurry on more impetuously until, with a roar and a jarring crash, it sprang upon its victim. Clinging to the weather shrouds I could distinctly see some ten or twelve frightened seamen, who, when their light revealed my presence, turned their white faces toward me and waved their hands imploringly. I felt my gorge rise against these poor cowering worms. Why should they presume to shirk the narrow pathway along which all that is great and noble among mankind has traveled? There was one there who interested me more than they. He was a tall man, who stood apart from the others, balancing himself upon the swaying wreck as though he disdained to cling to rope or bulwark. His hands were clasped behind his back and his head was sunk upon his breast, but even in that despondent attitude there was a litheness and decision in his pose and in every motion which marked him as a man little likely to yield to despair. Indeed, I could see by his occasional rapid glances up and down and all around him that he was weighing every chance of safety, but though he often gazed across the raging surf to where he could see my dark figure upon the beach, his self-respect or some other reason forbid him from imploring my help in any way. He stood, dark, silent, and inscrutable, looking down on the black sea, and waiting for whatever fortune Fate might send him.

It seemed to me that that problem would very soon be settled. As I looked, an enormous billow, topping all the others, and coming after them, like a driver following a flock, swept over the vessel. Her foremast snapped short off, and the men who clung to the shrouds were brushed away like a swarm of flies. With a rending, riving sound the ship began to split in two, where the sharp back of the Mansie reef was sawing into her keel. The solitary man

upon the forecastle ran rapidly across the deck and seized hold of a white bundle which I had already observed but failed to make out. As he lifted it up the light fell upon it, and I saw that the object was a woman, with a spar lashed across her body and under her arms in such a way that her head should always rise above water. He bore her tenderly to the side and seemed to speak for a minute or so to her, as though explaining the impossibility of remaining on the ship. Her answer was a singular one. I saw her deliberately raise her hand and strike him across the face with it. He appeared to be silenced for a moment or so by this, but he addressed her again, directing her. as far as I could gather from his motions, how she should behave when in the water. She shrank away from him, but he caught her in his arms. He stooped over her for a moment and seemed to press his lips against her forehead. Then a great wave came welling up against the side of the breaking vessel, and leaning over he placed her upon the summit of it as gently as a child might be committed to its cradle. I saw her white dress flickering among the foam on the crest of the dark billow, and then the light sank gradually lower, and the riven ship and its lonely occupant were hidden from my eyes.

As I watched those things my manhood overcame my philosophy, and I felt a frantic impulse to be up and doing. I threw my cynicism to one side as a garment which I might don again at leisure, and I rushed wildly to my boat and my sculls. She was a leaky tub, but what then? Was I, who had cast many a wistful, doubtful glance at my opium bottle, to begin now to weigh chances and to cavil at danger. I dragged her down to the sea with the strength of a maniac and sprang in. For a moment or two it was a question whether she could live among the boiling surge, but a dozen frantic strokes took me through it, half full of water but still afloat. I was out on the unbroken waves now, at one time climbing, climbing up the

broad black breast of one, then sinking down, down on the other side, until looking up I could see the gleam of the foam all around me against the dark heavens. Far behind me I could hear the wild wailings of old Madge, who, seeing me start, thought no doubt that my madness had come to a climax. As I rowed I peered over my shoulder, until at last on the belly of a great wave which was sweeping toward me I distinguished the vague white outline of the woman. Stooping over, I seized her as she swept by me, and with an effort lifted her, all sodden with water, into the boat. There was no need to row back, for the next billow carried us in and threw us upon the beach. I dragged the boat out of danger, and then lifting up the woman I carried her to the house, followed by my housekeeper, loud with congratulation and praise.

Now that I had done this thing a reaction set in upon me. I felt that my burden lived, for I heard the faint beat of her heart as I pressed my ear against her side in carrying her. Knowing this, I threw her down beside the fire which Madge had lighted, with as little sympathy as though she had been a bundle of fagots. I never glanced at her to see if she were fair or no. For many years I had cared little for the face of a woman. As I lay in my hammock upstairs, however, I heard the old woman as she chafed the warmth back into her, crooning a chorus of, "Eh, the puir lassie! Eh, the bonnie lassie!" from which I gathered that this piece of jetsam was both young and comely.

The morning after the gale was peaceful and sunny. As I walked along the long sweep of sand I could hear the panting of the sea. It was heaving and swirling about the reef, but along the shore it rippled in gently enough. There was no sign of the schooner, nor was there any wreckage upon the beach, which did not surprise me, as I knew there was a great undertow in those waters. A couple of broad-winged gulls were hovering and skimming over

the scene of the shipwreck, as though many strange things were visible to them beneath the waves. At times I could hear their raucous voices as they spoke to one another of what they saw.

When I came back from my walk the woman was waiting at the door for me. I began to wish when I saw her that I had never saved her, for here was an end of my privacy. She was very young—at the most nineteen, with a pale, somewhat refined face, yellow hair, merry blue eyes, and shining teeth. Her beauty was of an ethereal type. She looked so white and light and fragile that she might have been the spirit of that storm-foam out of which I plucked her. She had wreathed some of Madge's garments round her in a way which was quaint and not unbecoming. As I strode heavily up the pathway, she put out her hands with a pretty, child-like gesture, and ran down toward me, meaning, as I surmise, to thank me for having saved her, but I put her aside with a wave of my hand and passed her. At this she seemed somewhat hurt, and the tears sprang into her eyes, but she followed me into the sitting-room and watched me wistfully. "What country do you come from?" I asked her suddenly.

She smiled when I spoke, but shook her head.

"Français?" I asked. "Deutsch?" "Espagnol?"—each time she shook her head, and then she rippled off into a long statement in some tongue of which I could not understand one word.

After breakfast was over, however, I got a clew to her nationality. Passing along the beach once more, I saw that in a cleft of the ridge a piece of wood had been jammed. I rowed out to it in my boat, and brought it ashore. It was part of the sternpost of a boat, and on it, or rather on the piece of wood attached to it was the word "Archangel," painted in strange, quaint lettering. "So," I thought, as I paddled slowly back, "this pale damsel is a Russian. A fit subject for the White Czar and a proper

dweller on the shores of the White Sea!" It seemed to me strange that one of her apparent refinement should perform so long a journey in so frail a craft. When I came back into the house, I pronounced the word "Archangel" several times in different intonations, but she did not appear to recognize it.

I shut myself up in the laboratory all the morning, continuing a research which I was making upon the nature of the allotropic forms of carbon and of sulphur. When I came out at mid-day for some food she was sitting by the table with a needle and thread, mending some rents in her clothes, which were now dry. I resented her continued presence, but I could not turn her out on the beach to shift for herself. Presently she presented a new phase of her character. Pointing to herself and then to the scene of the shipwreck, she held up one finger, by which I understood her to be asking whether she was the only one saved. I nodded my head to indicate that she was. On this she sprang out of the chair with a cry of great joy, and holding the garment which she was mending over her head, and swaying it from side to side with the motion of her body, she danced as lightly as a feather all around the room, and then out through the open door into the sunshine. As she whirled round she sang in a plaintive, shrill voice some uncouth, barbarous chant, expressive of exultation. I called out to her, "Come in, you young fiend, come in and be silent!" but she went on with her dance. Then she suddenly ran toward me, and catching my hand before I could pluck it away, she kissed it. While we were at dinner she spied one of my pencils, and taking it up she wrote the two words "Sophie Ramusine" upon a piece of paper, and then pointed to herself as a sign that that was her name. She handed the pencil to me, evidently expecting that I would be equally communicative, but I put it in my pocket as a sign that I wished to hold no intercourse with her.

Every moment of my life now I regretted the unguarded

precipitancy with which I had saved this woman. What was it to me whether she had lived or died? I was no young, hot-headed youth to do such things. It was bad enough to be compelled to have Madge in the house, but she was old and ugly, and could be ignored. This one was young and lively, and so fashioned as to divert attention from graver things. Where could I send her, and what could I do with her? If I sent information to Wick it would mean that officials and others would come to me and pry, and peep, and chatter—a hateful thought. It was better to endure her presence than that.

I soon found that there were fresh troubles in store for me. There is no place safe from the swarming, restless race of which I am a member. In the evening, when the sun was dipping down behind the hills, casting them into dark shadow, but gilding the sands and casting a great glory over the sea, I went, as is my custom, for a stroll along the beach. Sometimes on these occasions I took my book with me. I did so on this night, and stretching myself upon a sand-dune I composed myself to read. As I lay there I suddenly became aware of a shadow which interposed itself between the sun and myself. Looking round, I saw to my great surprise a very tall, powerful man, who was standing a few yards off, and who, instead of looking at me, was ignoring my existence completely, and was gazing over my head with a stern, set face at the bay and the black line of the Mansie reef. His complexion was dark, with black hair, and short, curling beard, a hawk-like nose, and golden earrings in his ears—the general effect being wild and somewhat noble. He wore a faded velveteen jacket, a red-flannel shirt, and high sea boots, coming half way up his thighs. I recognized him at a glance as being the same man who had been left on the wreck the night before.

"Hullo!" I said, in an aggrieved voice. "You got ashore all right, then?"

"Yes," he answered, in good English. "It was no doing of mine. The waves threw me up. I wish to God I had been allowed to drown!" There was a slight foreign lisp in his accent which was rather pleasing. "Two good fishermen, who live round yonder point, pulled me out and cared for me; yet I could not honestly thank them for it."

"Ho! ho!" thought I, "here is a man of my own kidney. Why do you wish to be drowned?" I asked.

"Because," he cried, throwing out his long arms with a passionate, despairing gesture, "there—there in that blue smiling bay, lies my soul, my treasure—everything that I loved and lived for!"

"Well, well," I said. "People are ruined every day, but there's no use making a fuss about it. Let me inform you that this ground on which you walk is my ground, and that the sooner you take yourself off it the better pleased I shall be. One of you is quite trouble enough."

"One of us?" he gasped.

"Yes—if you could take her off with you I should be still more grateful."

He gazed at me for a moment as if hardly able to realize what I said, and then with a wild cry he ran away from me with prodigious speed and raced along the sands toward my house. Never before or since have I seen a human being run so fast. I followed as rapidly as I could, furious at this threatened invasion, but long before I reached the house he had disappeared through the open door. I heard a great scream from the inside, and as I came nearer the sound of a man's bass voice speaking rapidly and loudly. When I looked in the girl, Sophie Ramusine, was crouching in a corner, cowering away, with fear and loathing expressed on her averted face and in every line of her shrinking form. The other, with his dark eyes flashing, and his outstretched hands quivering with emotion, was pouring forth a torrent of passionate, pleading words. He made a step forward to her as I entered, but

she writhed still further away, and uttered a sharp cry like that of a rabbit when the weasel has him by the throat.

"Here!" I said, pulling him back from her. "This is a pretty to-do! What do you mean? Do you think this is a wayside inn or a place of public accommodation?"

"Oh, sir," he said, "excuse me. This woman is my wife, and I feared that she was drowned. You have brought me back to life."

"Who are you?" I asked roughly. "I am a man from Archangel," he said simply; "a Russian man."

"What is your name?"

"Ourganeff."

"Ourganeff!—and hers is Sophie Ramusine. She is no wife of yours. She has no ring."

"We are man and wife in the sight of Heaven," he said solemnly, looking upward. "We are bound by higher laws than those of earth." As he spoke the girl slipped behind me and caught me by the other hand, pressing it as though beseeching my protection. "Give me up my wife, sir," he went on. "Let me take her away from here."

"Look here, you—whatever your name is," I said sternly; "I don't want this wench here. I wish I had never seen her. If she died it would be no grief to me. But as to handing her over to you, when it is clear she fears and hates you, I won't do it. So now just clear you great body out of this, and leave me to my books. I hope I may never look upon your face again."

"You won't give her up to me?" he said hoarsely.

"I'll see you damned first!" I answered.

"Suppose I take her?" he cried, his dark face growing darker.

All my tigerish blood flushed up in a moment. I picked up a billet of wood from beside the fireplace. "Go," I said, in a low voice; "go quick, or I may do you an injury." He looked at me irresolutely for a moment, and

then he left the house. He came back again in a moment, however, and stood in the doorway looking in at us.

"Have a heed what you do," he said. "The woman is mine, and I shall have her. When it comes to blows, a Russian is as good a man as a Scotchman."

"We shall see that," I cried, springing forward, but he was already gone, and I could see his tall form moving away through the gathering darkness.

For a month or more after this things went smoothly with us. I never spoke to the Russian girl, nor did she ever address me. Sometimes when I was at work in my laboratory she would slip inside the door and sit silently there watching me with her great eyes. At first this intrusion annoyed me, but by degrees, finding that she made no attempt to distract my attention, I suffered her to remain. Encouraged by this concession, she gradually came to move the stool on which she sat nearer and nearer to my table, until after gaining a little every day during some weeks, she at last worked her way right up to me, and used to perch herself beside me whenever I worked. In this position she used, still without ever obtruding her presence in any way, to make herself very useful by holding my pens, test-tubes, or bottles, and handing me whatever I wanted, with never-failing sagacity. By ignoring the fact of her being a human being, and looking upon her as a useful automatic machine, I accustomed myself to her presence so far as to miss her on the few occasions when she was not at her post. I have a habit of talking aloud to myself at times when I work, so as to fix my results better in my mind. The girl must have had a surprising memory for sounds, for she could always repeat the words which I let fall in this way, without, of course, understanding in the least what they meant. I have often been amused at hearing her discharge a volley of chemical equations and algebraic symbols at old Madge, and then burst into a ringing laugh when the crone would shake her

head, under the impression, no doubt, that she was being addressed in Russian.

She never went more than a few yards from the house, and indeed never put her foot over the threshold without looking carefully out of each window in order to be sure that there was nobody about. By this I knew that she suspected that her fellow-countryman was still in the neighborhood, and feared that he might attempt to carry her off. She did something else which was significant. I had an old revolver with some cartridges, which had been thrown away among the rubbish. She found this one day, and at once proceeded to clean it and oil it. She hung it up near the door, with the cartridges in a little bag beside it, and whenever I went for a walk, she would take it down and insist upon my carrying it with me. In my absence she would always bolt the door. Apart from her apprehensions she seemed fairly happy, busying herself in helping Madge when she was not attending upon me. She was wonderfully nimble-fingered and natty in all domestic duties.

It was not long before I discovered that her suspicions were well founded, and that this man from Archangel was still lurking in the vicinity. Being restless one night I rose and peered out of the window. The weather was somewhat cloudy, and I could barely make out the line of the sea and the loom of my boat upon the beach. As I gazed, however, and my eyes became accustomed to the obscurity, I became aware that there was some other dark blur upon the sands, and that in front of my very door, where certainly there had been nothing of the sort the preceding night. As I stood at my diamond-paned lattice still peering and peeping to make out what this might be, a great bank of clouds rolled slowly away from the face of the moon, and a flood of cold, clear light was poured down upon the silent bay and the long sweep of its desolate shores. Then I saw what this was which haunted my door.

step. It was he, the Russian. He squatted there like a gigantic toad, with his legs doubled under him in strange Mongolian fashion, and his eyes fixed apparently upon the window of the room in which the young girl and the housekeeper slept. The light fell upon his upturned face, and I saw once more the hawk-like grace of his countenance, with the single deeply indented line of care upon his brow, and the protruding beard which marks the passionate nature. My first impulse was to shoot him as a trespasser, but, as I gazed, my resentment changed into pity and contempt. "Poor fool!" I said to myself, "is it then possible that you, whom I have seen looking open-eyed at present death, should have your whole thoughts and ambition centered upon this wretched slip of a girl—a girl, too, who flies from you and hates you? Most women would love you—were it but for that dark face and great, handsome body of yours—and yet you must needs hanker after the one in a thousand who will have no traffic with you." As I returned to my bed I chuckled much to myself over this thought. I knew that my bars were strong and my bolts thick. It mattered little to me whether this strange man spent his night at my door or a hundred leagues off, so long as he was gone by the morning. As I expected, when I rose and went out there was no sign of him, nor had he left any trace of his midnight vigil.

It was not long, however, before I saw him again. I had been out for a row one morning, for my head was aching, partly from prolonged stooping, and partly from the effects of a noxious drug which I had inhaled the night before. I pulled along the coast some miles, and then, feeling thirsy, I landed at a place where I knew that a fresh water stream trickled down into the sea. This rivulet passed through my land, but the mouth of it, where I found myself that day, was beyond my boundary line. I felt somewhat taken aback when rising from the stream at which I had slaked my thirst I found myself face to face

with the Russian. I was as much a trespasser now as he was, and I could see at a glance that he knew it.

"I wish to speak a few words to you," he said gravely.

"Hurry up, then!" I answered, glancing at my watch. "I have no time to listen to chatter."

"Chatter!" he repeated angrily. "Ah, but there. You Scotch people are strange men. Your face is hard and your words rough, but so are those of the good fishermen with whom I stay, yet I find that beneath it all there lie kind, honest natures. No doubt you are kind and good, too, in spite of your roughness."

"In the name of the devil," I said, "say your say, and go your way. I am weary of the sight of you!"

"Can I not soften you in any way?" he cried. "Ah, see—see here"—he produced a small Grecian cross from inside his velvet jacket. "Look at this. Our religions may differ in form, but at least we have some common thoughts and feelings when we see this emblem."

"I am not so sure of that," I answered.

He looked at me thoughtfully.

"You are a very strange man," he said at last. "I can not understand you. You still stand between me and Sophie. It is a dangerous position to take, sir. Oh, believe me, before it is too late. If you did but know what I have done to gain that woman—how I have risked my body, how I have lost my soul! You are a small obstacle to some which I have surmounted—you, whom a rip with a knife, or a blow from a stone, would put out of my way forever. But God preserve me from that," he cried wildly. "I am deep—too deep—already. Anything rather than that."

"You would do better to go back to your country," I said, "than to skulk about these sand-hills and disturb my leisure. When I have proof that you have gone away I shall hand this woman over to the protection of the Russian consul at Edinburgh. Until then, I shall guard her

myself, and not you, nor any Muscovite that ever breathed, shall take her from me!"

"And what is your object in keeping me from Sophie?" he asked. "Do you imagine that I would injure her? Why, man, I would give my life freely to save her from the slightest harm. Why do you do this thing?"

"I do it because it is my good pleasure to act so," I answered. "I give no man reasons for my conduct."

"Look here!" he cried, suddenly blazing into fury, and advancing toward me with his shaggy mane bristling and his brown hands clinched. "If I thought you had one dishonest thought toward this girl—if for a moment I had reason to believe that you had any base motive for detaining her—as sure as there is a God in Heaven I should drag the heart out of your bosom with my hands." The very idea seemed to have put the man in a frenzy, for his face was all distorted and his hands opened and shut convulsively. I thought that he was about to spring at my throat.

"Stand off," I said, putting my hand on my pistol. "If you lay a finger on me I shall kill you."

He put his hand into his pocket, and for a moment I thought he was about to produce a weapon too, but instead of that he whipped out a cigarette and lighted it, breathing the smoke rapidly into his lungs. No doubt he had found by experience that this was the most effectual way of curbing his passions.

"I told you," he said in a quieter voice, "that my name is Ourganeff—Alexis Ourganeff. I am a Finn by birth, but I have spent my life in every part of the world. I was one who could never be still, nor settle down to a quiet existence. After I came to own my own ship there is hardly a port from Archangel to Australia which I have not entered. I was rough and wild and free, but there was one at home, sir, who was prim and white-handed and soft-tongued, skillful in [illegible] which

women love. This youth by his wiles and tricks stole from me the love of the girl whom I had ever marked as my own, and who up to that time had seemed in some sort inclined to return my passion. I had been on a voyage to Hammerfest for ivory, and coming back unexpectedly I learned that my pride and treasure was to be married to this soft-skinned boy, and that the party had actually gone to the church. In such moments, sir, something gives way in my head, and I hardly know what I do. I landed with a boat's crew—all men who had sailed with me for years, and who were as true as steel. We went up to the church. They were standing, she and he, before the priest, but the thing had not been done. I dashed between them and caught her round the waist. My men beat back the frightened bridegroom and the lookers-on. We bore her down to the boat and aboard our vessel, and then getting up anchor we sailed away across the White Sea until the spires of Archangel sank down behind the horizon. She had my cabin, my room, every comfort. I slept among the men in the forecastle. I hoped that in time her aversion to me would wear away, and that she would consent to marry me in England or in France. For day and days we sailed. We saw the North Cape die away behind us, and we skirted the gray Norwegian coast, but still, in spite of every attention, she would not forgive me for tearing her from that pale-faced lover of hers. Then came this cursed storm which shattered both my ship and my hopes, and has deprived me even of the sight of the woman for whom I have risked so much. Perhaps she may learn to love me yet. You, sir," he said wistfully, "look like one who has seen much of the world. Do you not think that she may come to forget this man and to love me?"

"I am tired of your story," I said, turning away. "For my part, I think you are a great fool. If you imagine that this love of yours will pass away you had best amuse yourself as best you can until it does. If, on the other hand,

it is a fixed thing, you can not do better than cut your throat, for that is the shortest way out of it. I have no more time to waste on the matter." With this I hurried away and walked down to the boat. I never looked round, but I heard the dull sound of his feet upon the sands as he followed me.

"I have told you the beginning of my story," he said, "and you shall know the end some day. You would do well to let the girl go."

I never answered him, but pushed the boat off. When I had rowed some distance out I looked back and saw his tall figure upon the yellow sand as he stood gazing thoughtfully after me. When I looked again some minutes later he had disappeared.

For a long time after this my life was as regular and as monotonous as it had been before the shipwreck. At times I hoped that the man from Archangel had gone away altogether, but certain footsteps which I saw upon the sand, and more particularly a little pile of cigarette ash which I found one day behind a hillock from which a view of the house might be obtained, warned me that, though invisible, he was still in the vicinity. My relations with the Russian girl remained the same as before. Old Madge had been somewhat jealous of her presence at first, and seemed to fear that what little authority she had would be taken away from her. By degrees, however, as she came to realize my utter indifference, she became reconciled to the situation, and, as I have said before, profited by it, as our visitor performed much of the domestic work.

And now I am coming near the end of this narrative of mine, which I have written a great deal more for my own amusement than for that of any one else. The termination of the strange episode in which these two Russians had played a part was as wild and as sudden as the commencement. The events of one single night freed me from all my troubles, and left me once more alone with my books

and my studies, as I had been before their intrusion. Let me endeavor to describe how this came about.

I had had a long day of heavy and wearying work, so that in the evening I determined upon taking a long walk. When I emerged from the house my attention was attracted by the appearance of the sea. It lay like a sheet of glass, so that never a ripple disturbed its surface. Yet the air was filled with that indescribable moaning sound which I have alluded to before—a sound as though the spirits of all those who lay beneath those treacherous waters were sending a sad warning of coming troubles to their brethren in the flesh. The fishermen's wives along that coast know the eerie sound, and look anxiously across the waters for the brown sails making for the land. When I heard it I stepped back into the house and looked at the glass. It was down below 29°. Then I knew that a wild night was coming upon us.

Underneath the hills where I walked that evening it was dull and chill, but their summits were rosy-red, and the sea was brightened by the sinking sun. There were no clouds of importance in the sky, yet the dull groaning of the sea grew louder and stronger. I saw, far to the eastward, a brig beating up for Wick, with a reef in her topsails. It was evident that her captain had read the signs of nature as I had done. Behind her a long, lurid haze lay low upon the water, concealing the horizon. "I had better push on," I thought to myself, "or the wind may rise before I can get back."

I suppose I must have been at least half a mile from the house when I suddenly stopped and listened breathlessly. My ears were so accustomed to the noises of nature, the sighing of the breeze and the sob of the waves, that any other sound made itself heard at a great distance. I waited, listening with all my ears. Yes, there it was again —a long-drawn, shrill cry of despair, ringing over the sands and echoed back from the hills behind me—a piteous ap-

peal for aid. It came from the direction of my house. I turned and ran back homeward at the top of my speed, plowing through the sand, racing over the shingle. In my mind there was a great dim perception of what had occurred.

About a quarter of a mile from the house there is a high sand-hill, from which the whole country round is visible. When I reached the top of this I paused for a moment. There was the old gray building—there the boat. Everything seemed to be as I had left it. Even as I gazed, however, the shrill scream was repeated, louder than before, and the next moment a tall figure emerged from my door, the figure of the Russian sailor. Over his shoulder was the white form of the young girl, and even in his haste he seemed to bear her tenderly and with gentle reverence. I could hear her wild cries and see her desperate struggles to break away from him. Behind the couple came my old housekeeper, stanch and true, as the aged dog, who can no longer bite, still snarls with toothless gums at the intruder. She staggered feebly along at the heels of the ravisher, waving her long, thin arms, and hurling, no doubt, volleys of Scotch curses and imprecations at his head. I saw at a glance that he was making for the boat. A sudden hope sprang up in my soul that I might be in time to intercept him. I ran for the beach at the top of my speed. As I ran I slipped a cartridge into my revolver. This I determined should be the last of these invasions.

I was too late. By the time I reached the water's edge he was a hundred yards away, making the boat spring with every stroke of his powerful arms. I uttered a wild cry of impotent anger, and stamped up and down the sands like a maniac. He turned and saw me. Rising from his seat he made me a graceful bow, and waved his hand to me. It was not a triumphant or a derisive gesture. Even my furious and distempered mind recognized it as being a solemn and courteous leave-taking. Then he settled down to his

oars once more, and the little skiff shot away out over the bay. The sun had gone down now, leaving a single dull, red streak upon the water, which stretched away until it blended with the purple haze on the horizon. Gradually the skiff grew smaller and smaller as it sped across this lurid band, until the shades of night gathered round it and it became a mere blur upon the lonely sea. Then this vague loom died away also and darkness settled over it—a darkness which should never more be raised.

And why did I pace the solitary shore, hot and wrathful as a wolf whose whelp has been torn from it? Was it that I loved this Muscovite girl? No—a thousand times no. I am not one who, for the sake of a white skin or a blue eye, would belie my own life, and change the whole tenor of my thoughts and existence. My heart was untouched. But my pride—ah, there I had been cruelly wounded. To think that I had been unable to afford protection to the helpless one who craved it of me, and who relied on me! It was that which made my heart sick and sent the blood buzzing through my ears.

That night a great wind rose up from the sea, and the wild waves shrieked upon the shore as though they would tear it back with them into the ocean. The turmoil and the uproar were congenial to my vexed spirit. All night I wandered up and down, wet with spray and rain, watching the gleam of the white breakers and listening to the outcry of the storm. My heart was bitter against the Russian. I joined my feeble pipe to the screaming of the gale. "If he would but come back again!" I cried with clinched hands; "if he would but come back!"

He came back. When the gray light of morning spread over the eastern sky, and lighted up the great waste of yellow, tossing waters, with the brown clouds drifting swiftly over them, then I saw him once again. A few hundred yards off along the sand there lay a long dark object, cast up by the fury of the waves. It was my boat, much shat-

tered and splintered. A little further on, a vague, shapeless something was washing to and fro in the shallow water, all mixed with shingle and with seaweed. I saw at a glance that it was the Russian, face downward and dead. I rushed into the water and dragged him up on to the beach. It was only when I turned him over that I discovered that she was beneath him, his dead arms encircling her, his mangled body still intervening between her and the fury of the storm. It seemed that the fierce German Sea might beat the life out from him, but with all its strength it was unable to tear this one-idea'd man from the woman whom he loved. There were signs which led me to believe that during that awful night the woman's fickle mind had come at last to learn the worth of the true heart and strong arm which struggled for her and guarded her so tenderly. Why else should her little head be nestling so lovingly on his broad breast, while her yellow hair entwined itself with his flowing beard? Why too should there be that bright smile of ineffable happiness and triumph, which death itself had not had power to banish from his dusky face? I fancy that death had been brighter to him than life had ever been.

Madge and I buried them there on the shores of the desolate northern sea. They lie in one grave deep down beneath the yellow sand. Strange things may happen in the world around them. Empires may rise and may fall, dynasties may perish, great wars may come and go, but, heedless of it all, those two shall embrace each other for ever and aye, in their lonely shrine by the side of the sounding ocean. I sometimes have thought that their spirits flit like shadowy sea-mews over the wild waters of the bay. No cross or symbol marks their resting-place, but old Madge puts wild flowers upon it at times, and when I pass on my daily walk and see the fresh blossoms scattered over the sand, I think of the strange couple who came from afar, and broke for a little space the dull tenor of my somber life.

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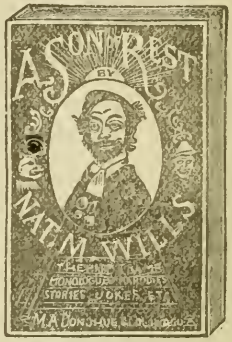

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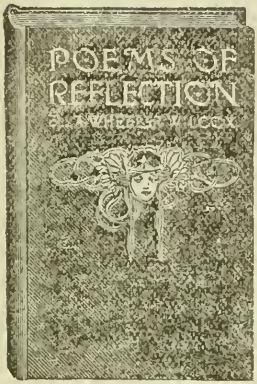

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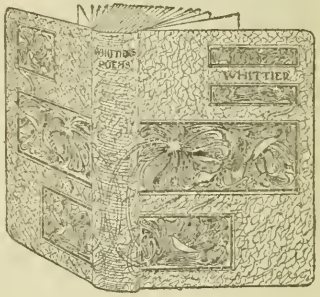

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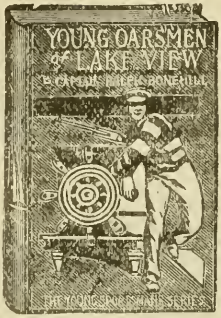

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